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SERMONS.

WILMOT BUXTON.



The Tree of Life



THE TREE OF LIFE.

PLAIN SERMONS ON THE FRUITS OF
THE SPIRIT.

"THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS LOVE, JOY, PEACE, LONGSUFFERING,
GENTLENESS, GOODNESS, FAITH, MEEKNESS, TEMPERANCE."

Galatians v. 22, 23.

BY THE REV.

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The Tree of Life.

Sermon I.

THE FIRST-FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT.

REVELATION XXII. 2.

"In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."



T. JOHN the Divine was in banishment in the island of Patmos. The tyrant Domitian, who sat upon the seat of Cæsar, had sent the Apostle into exile, but although S. John was far from friends and home, he was not far from God. No banishment can banish us from Jesus, no prison door can shut out our Saviour. They will show you in Patmos to-day the rocky cave where S. John dwelt, and from whose gloomy entrance he saw Heaven opened and the things which shall be hereafter. What memories must have come to the beloved Apostle as he knelt in that rude cavern. As he gazed on the bright waters of

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the Ægean Sea, blue as the skies above them, he must have recalled that day by another sea, far away in Galilee, when he had heard the voice of the Master calling him to be a fisher of men. He must have thought on the events of that most holy life which he had understood with loving insight better than all the rest; the memory of the Lord's miracles must have come back to him, the turning the water into wine, the feeding of the multitude, the raising of dead Lazarus, miracles which had a deeper meaning for S. John than for the other disciples. Then those wonderful teachings of the Master, those talks about the water of life, and the new birth by the Spirit, and the Light of the world, and the True Vine, must have returned to S. John with new and deeper meaning. As he gazed seaward from his rocky cell, he must have seemed to see once more the awful scene on Calvary, to feel the trembling touch of the Virgin Mother, to hear the dying charge, "Behold thy mother." Once more he was hastening through the dim morning to the garden, and looking down on an empty tomb from which the stone was rolled away.

As S. John knelt in his rocky cavern, worn with prayer and fasting, there came to him such visions as the worldly, sensual man never sees. As the eye of love can see what is hidden from all others' sight, so the loving Apostle was permitted to look on Heaven; for it is only those who have the Kingdom of Heaven within them, who can see its glories revealed to them.

We do not know how the revelation came to him; it may be that it was when the sunset was filling all the sea and sky with glory that S. John looked up into the clouds, all bright with crimson and gold, and saw as it were a shining city, whose gates were like twelve pearls, and her foundations of stones most precious. Amidst all that shining cloudland of glory he saw as it were a river of water, clear as crystal, and on either side of the river the tree of life. What that tree of life was we know not, and we shall not know till we taste of its fruit new in our Father's Kingdom. But we who dwell in the garden of the Church here on earth have a tree of life, even the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ—

"Faithful Cross, above all other,
One and only noble Tree,
None in foliage, none in blossom,
None in fruit thy peer may be;
Sweetest wood and sweetest iron;
Sweetest weight is hung on thee."

It was the tree of death to our Master, but of life to us, since Jesus by His death upon the Cross has overcome death, and by His rising to life again has restored to us everlasting life. Our tree of life stands *on either side of the river*. The river of death lies between us and the better country, as Jordan lay between Israel and the Promised Land; and the power of the Cross, the tree of life, extends beyond the river of death, beyond this world into the world to come. Here, on

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this side of the river, it is our salvation ; there, on the other side, it will be our joy, our glory.

And notice that the tree of life had twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month. Here we see the Holy Church giving us the precious fruit of the Cross, the teachings of the Gospel, month by month, through the twelve months of the year. For every season of the Church there is the special fruit, the special teaching, provided. Advent warning, Christmas joy, enlightening at Epiphany, sorrow and humiliation in Lent, bitter grief and penitence at Passion-tide, joy and gladness at Easter and Ascension. Each comes at its appointed time, the tree of life bears twelve manner fruits, and yields her fruit every month.

The leaves of the tree of life are, we are told, *for the healing of the nations*. What disease of the soul is there for which the Cross of Christ has no healing medicine ? *Are we poor and in misery ?* The memory of our Master with no place where He might lay His Head, despised and rejected of men, will help us to bear our trouble, knowing that if we suffer with Him we shall be glorified together. *Is it loss or bereavement ?* Jesus lost all, friends, home, life itself, and He Who suffered loss for our gain will heal us of our sickness. *Is it loneliness ?* Jesus on the lonely Cross, treading the winepress alone, has medicine to cure us. *Is it doubt, or cowardice, or shrinking from pain ?* The perfect trust of the Son in the Father, the perfect courage of the Son of God, the perfect patience of the suffering

Saviour, these are precious healing balsams for the weakest of us.

And now let us think of the fruits of the tree of life. They are what S. Paul calls the fruits of the Spirit, purchased for us by Christ on the Cross, given to us, His Church, by the Holy Spirit. The first fruit of the Spirit is *love*. S. Paul puts that at the head in his glorious list. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." S. Paul puts love first because it is the seed from which all other good things spring, it is the source from which all streams of holiness flow, it is the keynote from which all the music of righteousness is tuned. Without love there can be no true joy, nor peace, nor long-suffering, nor gentleness, nor goodness, nor faith, nor meekness, nor temperance. All religion is bound up in the two commandments—Love the Lord thy God and thy neighbour as thyself. Love fulfills all God's law.

Love comes first among the fruits of the Spirit because it is divine; God is love, and when we have love we are most like God. Love is the foundation upon which all our religion is built, upon the love of God and of our neighbour hang all the law and the prophets. S. Paul says, "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, but the greatest of these is charity," that is love. Without love nothing that we do is worth anything.

First, we think of *the love of God*. Can I describe it

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to you? I might as well try to count the drops in the ocean, or the stars which shine above it—

“God only knows the love of God.”

We talk of it, we read of it, we think of it, but we cannot realize it, or understand it. Jesus said once to His disciples, “What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.” That is true of all which our Lord has done, and is doing, for us. We cannot understand it now. We read of God so loving the world that He sent His only-begotten Son to suffer and die for our redemption. We read this, and we believe it, but do we *understand* it? Do you think those Jewish shepherds, and those wise men from the East, who first saw the Son of God lying in the manger at Bethlehem, understood all that it meant? No, they believed or they worshipped, but they could not understand. Neither can we after nineteen centuries of Christianity understand the greatness of the love of God which made Him condescend to that lowly birth, which laid the King of Glory in a manger, which made Him willing to be of no reputation, and to take the form of a servant. Do you suppose that those who watched the Lord Jesus dying upon the Cross understood all the love which made Him lay down His life for sinners? The careless, unbelieving crowd did not, any more than it does to-day; but even the tender hearts of the faithful, the Virgin Mother, the loving S. John, could not understand the great love of God;

and we, after all these centuries, cannot understand it either ; some of us are scarcely touched by the story of Good Friday as it comes round year after year. But the love of God is still there, though we cannot understand it. He purchased man's salvation, though man could not know what He was doing. He loves us to-day, though we cannot fully comprehend His love.

"What I do thou knowest not now." That is true of God's dealing with us to-day. We bring our child to the font in Holy Baptism, some of us are very simple folk, and we do not understand much about it ; but we know that the Lord Jesus commanded the children to be brought unto Him, and so we obey. Well, we do not understand all that God does for the child in that Sacrament, but His love is there all the same, and He washes our child's soul till it is whiter than snow. So when we draw near to the Altar of the Blessed Sacrament. We do not understand much about it, how can we? Some of us are plain, ignorant folk, all we know is to obey our Master's command, so we come as children come to the parent's call, not understanding much, but, like the children, we are fed. Our want of understanding does not stop God's love, He gives us such good things as pass man's understanding.

"What I do, thou knowest not now." No, *we* do not know, but God does. If you were to take a voyage in a steamship, would you expect to understand all the working of the machinery and the management of the ship? No, you would leave that to the captain. So

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in the voyage of life we cannot understand much of the workings of providence, nor why things should be thus and thus. Half of the misery and the unbelief of the world arises from people wanting to know too much, to be as God, knowing good and evil. We do not go on board a ship and say—I refuse to believe in this ship's safety, or the skill of her officers, unless I understand fully the meaning of every order given, and every movement of the machinery. Yet some of us refuse to believe in the goodness and love of God because we cannot understand all His dealings with us.

Brethren, learn to believe that however rough your way of life may be, however many the troubles and sorrows which befall you, it is God's *love* which is leading you, and dealing with you, for your good. Now you cannot understand this, of course. You think you can realize God's love when He makes your life smooth and pleasant ; when all things prosper with you, you say—God is very good to me. But if God afflicts you, sends you illness, or sorrow, or loss, you cry out that God has forgotten to be gracious. You cannot understand why you should suffer. The sick man does not understand why he must swallow bitter medicine, but he does not doubt the loving care of the hand which gives it. The sufferer undergoing an operation does not understand why the keen knife is applied, but he does not doubt the wisdom and goodness of the surgeon who wounds him only to cure. You say to me, perhaps—I do not see God's love in afflicting me

so severely. Neither does your child understand that it is love which makes you refuse certain of its requests, or makes you chastise it for its faults. One refuses to see God's love in giving him a crippled leg, another in taking away his sight or his hearing. He says—What have I done that I should have to bear this?

Ah, my brethren, it is God's *love*, not His anger, which is afflicting you. He is making you perfect through sufferings, He is letting you receive the print of the nails. He whispers, "What I do thou knowest not now." You of the crippled limb do not know that you were not walking in God's way, and that when you were strong and active you chose your own road rather than His. You of the deaf ears do not know that you listened too much to the voices of the world, and God afflicted you that you might be able to hearken to the still small voice of the Holy Spirit speaking to your heart. You of the blinded eyes, God shut out the sights of the world from you that you might learn to see more clearly the things which concern your peace. You who have known bereavement, who have seen husband, or wife, or child taken away, do you doubt God's love? Ah, if we only knew! If we could only understand that we were loving the creature more than the Creator, putting wife, or child, or husband before God, blocking up the way to Heaven with our earthly idols, then we should know that it was love which took them away. Do you murmur at God's Hand because He took your child away? Would you rather that the

child should have grown up to disgrace your name, to break your heart, to lose his soul? Oh, believe me, it is God's love which afflicts, though we cannot understand.

It is not so great a wonder that some people need much sorrow to change and soften their nature. The farmer has a plot of ground on his farm that wants more ploughing and breaking up than all the other land put together. Of course the land does not know why it is more broken by plough and harrow than all the rest, but the farmer knows the reason, the land is the hardest and the roughest of all. You see a man put the metal through the hottest fire again and again, and you ask him the reason, and he tells you it is because it is so full of dross and impurity. Ah, some of us are so hard, and so impure, that we need the fire or the ploughshare over and over again. It is God's love which deals with us so. Some of us, many of us, need much stern treatment that we may cease to be hard and worthless. It is God's love which brings out the best of us in the rough times of trouble. His stars shine brightest when the night is darkest. Learn, then, to see God's love in your troubles, pray that the Holy Spirit may teach you God's love.

Sermon II.

FRUITFUL CHRISTIANS.

S. MATTHEW VII. 16.

“Ye shall know them by their fruits.”



TREE is known by its fruits. If you take me into your garden and show me a fruit tree, and tell me it is the finest and handsomest tree you possess, I admire its straight trunk, and spreading branches, and wealth of leaves; but I have a question to ask. I ask—What sort of fruit does it bear? And if you tell me that this tree is the tallest and finest in your garden, but that it never bears fruit, I do not think much of it as a fruit tree. So is it with the Christian. He may be a very fair and good Christian to look upon, he may profess his faith very loudly, he may say the Creed in Church very correctly, and sing psalms and hymns with a very musical voice, but I want something more than this, I want to know how he acts and speaks to his neighbour, whether he loves his fellow-men, whether he brings forth fruit. If he does not, then, in spite of his profession, he is acting a part, he is a Christian only in name. A man may go

to Church all his life, and take part in the services, and yet be cruel, selfish, and unjust to his brethren. You must not say that you are true followers of Christ merely because you are baptized and attend to the outward forms of religion, the test is whether you bring forth the fruit of love, whether you love God, and show it by loving your neighbour. Outside Christianity is of no use. The kingdom of God is within you, and must show itself by outward acts and words of loving kindness.

Orpah kissed Naomi, her mother-in-law, but Ruth clave unto her. That kiss seemed very loving and kindly, but how did it help poor, lonely Naomi? Outward profession of Christianity without love is like Orpah's kiss. If we are truly followers of Christ we ring out distinctly the note of love. Let us understand exactly what love means. Things are often called by wrong names. A man betrays the confidence and trust of a weak, confiding woman, and calls it love. A man profanes the sanctity of home life, and renders husband and wife miserable, and calls it love. But it is not love, it is lust; and as it has been well said, love is an angel, and lust is a devil. Love is divine, love is of God. It does not come to us by nature. Naturally we hate each other, and are jealous and envious of each other. Love is a gift, and like every good gift, cometh down from God. When our Lord Jesus Christ was about to ascend to His Father, He promised to send the Holy Spirit upon His followers, and that Holy Spirit was to

bestow gifts. These gifts enable us to bring forth fruits of the Spirit, and the very first and greatest is *love*. Our Lord told His disciples that there should be one sign by which the world should know them as His followers. "By this shall men know that ye are My disciples, if ye love one another." There is no word about learning, or eloquence, or power, or influence, or mighty works; all these without love are nothing worth.

What, think you, is the greatest hindrance to the growth of Christianity in the world? The want of love among those who profess and call themselves Christians. It is no wonder that some refuse to believe in the teachings of the Gospel when they can point out people who speak cruelly and spitefully of their neighbours, who rejoice over another's misfortune, who cheat and over-reach their brethren, who quarrel and decline to be reconciled, who refuse to kneel in the same spot in Church with a poor acquaintance, and yet all the while call themselves by the name of Christian.

Yes, it is this want of affection amongst those who ought to love as brethren which is the great obstacle in the way of the Gospel. How then can we show our love to our neighbour? First, we can show *sympathy*. We can enter into the feelings of others. That is more than angels can do. Angels can pity us, and do pity us, but they cannot enter into our sorrows and trials. There is a picture by a famous artist which represents an angel standing by the Cross of Jesus, and feeling

the points of the thorns which had crowned the Saviour. There is a look of wonder on the face of the angel, who is trying to understand what suffering means. No one can realize suffering who has never suffered. We do not expect the holy angels to understand the aches and pains of this troublesome world, but we go to Jesus in our troubles, because He has been through it all—poverty, pain, loneliness, misunderstanding, ingratitude, false judgment, agony, both of mind and body. As He can sympathize to the uttermost with us, He gives us divine love that we may sympathize with our brethren.

There are people who appear to be very good Christians in many respects; they are attentive to the duties of religion, they lead pure and upright lives, but they are just like a statue carved in stone on a Church wall, perfectly cold and hard. You would never think of going to them in the hour of sorrow, or of telling them the story of your grief. They have not the golden key of sympathetic love, which alone opens all hearts. The very smallest act of sympathy is valuable, if it be only a silent clasp of a hand, or a tear shed for another's grief, or a patient listening to the story of another's woe. Anyone can give money, but it is only one with the grace of God in his heart who can give love. A lady working as a missionary in the East was worn out one day by hard work, and knelt half fainting on the floor of a room. One of the native women who belonged to her class whispered to her, "Lean against me." The lady refused at first, but the other drew her

close, and said, "If you love me, *lean hard.*" Jesus says to all of us—If you love Me, lean on Me hard ; and we learn from His love that all whom we love cannot lean too hard upon us.

Next, we can show our love to our neighbour by *speaking kindly of him.* Some of us feel that they cannot *do much* towards helping others, but there is one thing we can all do, we can speak kindly of each other. There is a great want of this loving talk amongst us. People who would not injure another by an act, always say unkind, uncharitable things of him. I believe our tongues will give us more to answer for in the day of Judgment, than all our other members put together. There are people who live side by side in the same parish all their lives, and have never wronged each other by deed, who yet love to pick holes in each other's character. They have always a disparaging word or a suggestive hint of evil for them. These people can see the spots on the sun, though they ignore its brightness ; they can find a blemish in the purest flower, or a fault in the most noble nature.

The religion of the tongue is not attended to half enough. We are bidden to have our speech seasoned with salt, that it may be pure, and surely it ought to be sweetened with love that it may not cause pain. Some people's tongues are very swords, they never speak without wounding and bruising some delicate true nature. We are told that the Mimosa, the sensitive plant growing out in the desert, no sooner feels

the distant trample of horses' feet upon the earth, than it curls up its trembling leaves; so there are people the very tones of whose voice make a sensitive nature shrink and recoil. Believe me, brethren, it is one of the great Christian duties to *speak* kindly of our neighbour, to *make the best* of people.

Again, we can show our love by our *manner*. We are sometimes told that certain people have very kind hearts, but they are concealed under a rough manner. Ah, it is just that rough manner that hurts. It matters nothing how kind the heart may be, if the hands be rough and the words hard. Manner is one of the most important things in this world. If you are lying ill and nervous upon your bed, and someone moves your pillow for you, it makes all the difference whether the hand is gentle or rough. Some people's kindness always hurts, their precious balms only break our head. If the love of Christ is in our hearts we shall never say a rude word to another, never utter a sharp speech which may pierce and wound, never touch a sore spot with a sneer or cruel jest. "Charity suffereth long, and is kind." There are many professing Christians who are correct enough in their lives, and religious in their views, but they are not kind, either in manner or in speech.

Again, we can show our love by *forgiving those who wrong us*. "Charity endureth all things." There is no virtue in loving them who love us. The test of a

Christian is that he can fully and freely forgive those who injure him, and can show them kindness if the opportunity offers. But you say to me—It is so hard to do this, that it is not in flesh and blood to forgive our enemies. No, it is not in flesh and blood, but it is possible by the grace of God working in our hearts. The natural man hates his enemy; the man in whose heart is the love of Christ, forgives him. Again, you tell me it is so hard to bear the injustice and the unkindness of people, much more to love them. And yet you call yourself the follower of Jesus Christ. How many people in the whole world were His friends, and showed Him kindness? How many spoke well of Him, or treated Him with justice? Yet He lived for those, and died for those who were His enemies; He prayed for those who spitefully used Him. Surely our Christianity must be a very poor thing if it will not enable us to forgive those who wrong us. I have heard of a disobedient and unruly son who left home and set all his father's wishes at defiance. After a time he heard of his father's death, and went to the funeral, hard and unmoved as ever, hoping nothing, expecting nothing. When his father's will was opened, it was found that he had forgiven his prodigal son, and had given him his share of the inheritance with the rest. Then the young man's heart was softened at last by that love which suffereth long and is kind, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love has a key to unlock a hard heart when everything else fails.

It may be that some of you who hear me now have quarrelled with your neighbours; you never speak now to those who were once your friends; you only talk of them in an unkindly way. You think you do right to be angry; you have been badly treated, badly spoken of. Ah, my brethren, where is your Christianity? How can you presume to call yourselves by the Name of Christ, and to come to His Church, and His Altar, whilst you are at enmity one with another. "Leave there thy gift before the Altar; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Perhaps some of you think that one day you will be reconciled to your neighbour with whom you have quarrelled, you will write or go to him, and hold out the hand of reconciliation. Never put off a plain duty, that *some day* may never come. A son quarrels with his mother, and they part in anger, and he goes far away from home for a long time. Then he thinks of all her love and self-sacrifice, and he makes up his mind to go home and be reconciled to her. He travels far, and at length reaches the old home. It is dark and still, and the windows look out with blinded eyes. He asks a neighbour of his mother's welfare, and she answers, "They are burying her to-day." Yes, repentance may come too late. You all remember that text—"The door was shut." If any one of you is nourishing an angry feeling in his heart against another, let him hear the whisper of the Lord Jesus, "This new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another."

Then, lastly, be *liberal* in your love, let it flow out beyond your own family and friends. People are sometimes very loving among themselves, but very selfish and indifferent as to the wants of their neighbours. Try to believe in the brotherhood of man, and that every one who needs you has a claim upon your love and your help. It is this love of self which spoils our lives, and shuts out all other love. With many people religion itself is merely selfishness. Try to forget self, and to think more of your brethren, and to sacrifice yourself for the sake of others. Once in one of the steepest streets in Edinburgh, a carriage with its frightened horses came dashing along at a terrible pace. Everyone sprang out of the road except a little child, who stood unconscious of its danger. A Scotch woman saw the deadly peril of the child, and springing forward, caught it in her arms almost under the hoofs of the horses. Someone asked the woman if the child was hers, but she answered, "I do not know whose it is, but it is *somebody's bairn*."

Sermon III.

THE JOY THAT LASTS.

GALATIANS V. 22.

"The fruit of the Spirit is joy."



ONE of the best fruits which drops from the tree of life is joy. Of the many sweet things which come to us from the honeycomb of the Gospel joy is the sweetest. This joy—holy joy—is different from all other. Our Lord says to us, "Your joy no man taketh from you." The world can give some kinds of joy, but they never last long. As sings one of our poets so sadly—

"There's not a joy the world can give,
Like that it takes away."

Yes, the world can give us joy, because it is God's world, and God is love, and likes to see His people happy. But the joy of earthly pleasure is like a child's brief holiday, bright while it lasts, but very soon over.

There is the joy of *youth*. The young rejoice in their health and strength, they know nothing of cares or

sickness, the world is a great playing field to them, they never trouble about to-morrow. But presently things are changed. The world is no longer a playground, but a hard workshop, the flowers have given place to the briars and thorns of working-day life. We grow older, and see others taking our place, and running in the race ahead of us, and we say sadly, I could do that once, but the joy of youth is over.

There is the *joy of home life*, very pure and precious while it lasts. There is the joy which comes with wedding bells, when the future seems all brightness without shadows. But that joy is often short-lived. We see the faces which seemed so full of happiness, marked and lined with sorrow and misfortune and disappointment. The bells which rang so merrily have tolled a knell, the eyes which looked so confidently on the future, are dim with tears.

There is the *joy of parents over their children*. Few sights are more beautiful than that of a mother with her little child. Few joys are more pure and holy. But even that joy is often turned into sorrow. The day comes when the mother may wish bitterly that her child had never been born, when the father may echo the sad words of David, "Would to God that I had died for thee, my son, my son." Or the time comes when the parent can no more look on that child of many hopes and many prayers. Somewhere in a sacred hiding-place the mother keeps his first copy-book, his baby clothes, his broken toy, and these and a lonely

grave, perhaps in a far-off land, are all that remain to her.

There is the *joy of wealth*, but it is uncertain and short-lived. The more a man has, the more he wants, the golden yoke weighs heavily upon him, and often his mind and health give way under the pressure of anxiety. Then, too, there is always the haunting fear lest the money should be lost.

There is the *joy of fame and conquest*, but it soon passes away. The strong arm which pointed the way to victory, the clever brain which astonished the world by its productions, grow old and feeble. The man who led an army to conquest, needs a hand to lead him now, and the greatest of men knows that "ashes to ashes ends, even in Westminster Abbey, a man's noblest story, and dust to dust concludes his noblest song." That great General, the Duke of Marlborough, lived to forget that he had ever led the armies of England to victory. Thompson, the poet, lived to forget that he had ever written verses.

Joy is essential to our well-being : a joyless life cannot be a healthy life. We need some kind of joy as much as a flower needs fresh air and sunshine. If you were to keep a rose tree in a dark cellar it would lose all its colour, and finally die ; so a man without any joy in his life loses his manhood, and cannot be said to live. Joy is the best drug in the physician's knowledge ; he knows that bright, sunny, happy faces, cheerful songs, merry laughter, will do more good to his patient than

all the other medicines in the world. So with spiritual things. Of all the medicines which Jesus, the Good Physician, has to heal our sickness, joy is one of the best. The best Christian is the happy Christian. I do not think much of the religion of the people who have black looks, and sharp tongues, and who always speak of holy things with the accompaniment of a sigh. The religion of these people is made up of vinegar and gall. There is a flavour of bitterness about all they do or say, and it is no wonder that the world shrinks back from them and says—If this be religion, I pray thee have me excused. But it is *not* religion, my brethren. True religion makes people happy. “The fruit of the Spirit is joy.” There is a musical instrument called an Æolian harp, and whenever the slightest breath of wind blows over its strings it gives forth sweet sounds; so is it with the servant of Christ, the breath of the Holy Spirit comes to him, and he rejoices, his life is a song and melody unto the Lord, a *Te Deum* of praise. “The fruit of the Spirit is joy.”

And notice that this holy joy which is the fruit of the Holy Spirit is different from all other joy. It is different from anything which the world can give because it *lasts*. The joys of the world are as short-lived as the bubbles in a wine-cup. The joy of power and ambition may end on a scaffold as with King Charles I., or in a prison, as with the last Emperor of France. The joy of wealth may end, as it did for a famous millionaire lately, in madness and suicide. As

the wheel of earthly fortune turns round, the prince of yesterday may be the pauper of to-day, and the flowers which decked the dress of beauty one day, may the next day be strewed upon her grave. It is not so with spiritual joy. Jesus says to us and all His people, "Your joy no man taketh from you." This joy belongs only to those who know and love the Lord Jesus Christ. We read much in the Bible, especially in the Psalms, about happiness and rejoicing, but we always find it coupled with the Name of God. We hear of those who rejoice in the *Lord*, who sing merrily unto *God*, who rejoice with holy joy. David tells us that in God's presence is fulness of joy; that he will offer in God's tabernacle sacrifices of joy; how he went with the multitude to the House of God with the voice of joy and praise; and again, how he went to the Altar of God, unto God his exceeding joy.

True joy, then, is centred in Jesus Christ, and is to be found in a holy life and the duties of religion. The world does not understand this. Its idea of joy is indulgence in a mere passing pleasure; its motto is—Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. It finds no real happiness in holiness, and it looks upon the duties of religion and the services of the Church as irksome and gloomy. It is for this reason that so much of this world is sad and discontented, its god is pleasure, and that is a god who always disappoints us. If you would find true joy you must look where true joys may be found; you must be able to say—My spirit

hath rejoiced in God my Saviour ; I will go into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise ; I will go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy.

What then is this joy which the world can neither give nor take away ? First, it is the joy of knowing that our *sins are forgiven us*. Can there be any joy to equal that ? Does it matter what we may have to bear in this life, if we are certain that our pardon is sealed in Heaven, that our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life, that there await us "such good things as pass man's understanding" ? Our Lord said to His disciples, "Rejoice not because the spirits are subject unto you, but because your names are written in Heaven." But someone will say—How can I know that my sins are forgiven ; I *hope* so, but how can I be sure ? And I answer—Believe God. He tells you that if we repent of our sins, if the Church has spoken the words of absolution over us when truly penitent, we are forgiven as certainly as when the Lord Jesus said, "Go in peace, thy sins be forgiven thee." Try to make those words of the Absolution a reality for yourselves—"He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe His Holy Gospel." "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Jesus hath left power to His Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in Him, whereof we rejoice.

Next, our joy is that of knowing that *all things are being ordered for us for the best by God Himself*. My brethren, why do you fret and worry yourselves, why do you make life so hard a burden by adding to it a load of your own making? You can do no good by fretting, you cannot with all your carefulness add one cubit to your stature, or change the fortunes of the morrow by taking thought for it. The man who looks on life from a gambler's point of view, as a game of chance, who talks of his luck and his misfortunes, may well be anxious and unhappy. But if you can feel that you have committed yourselves and all you have into the Hands of God, that you ask His help in prayer for all you need and do ; if you have cast all your care upon Him, knowing that He careth for you ; if you feel that at all times and under all circumstances the Everlasting Arms are underneath you, you will go on your way rejoicing, knowing that the Lord is on your side, and that therefore you will not fear what man may do unto you. True joy is only to be found by those who live close to God, who tell God all their wants and weaknesses in prayer, who have no secrets from Him. If we lead a life of constant, real prayer, we cannot be unhappy. We shall feel God's Hand holding us and leading us, as the timid child in the darkness stretches out its hand and feels its mother's touch upon it, and is at rest. If you try to live a godly and prayerful life, you will find joy, you will be able to say, as you rise from your knees—

"All empty-handed came I in; full-handed forth I go;
Go Thou beside me, Lord of Grace, and keep me ever so.
Thanks are poor things for such wide good; but all my life is
Thine;
Thou hast turned my stones to bread, my water into wine."

Again, our joy is that of knowing that we are *trying to do our duty*. Whoever tries to live a godly and a Christian life will find it a life whose ways are pleasantness, and all whose paths are peace. The promise is sure—"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee." It is the selfish man who lives and works only for self, who is discontented and unhappy. If you would be happy, and know that joy which the world can neither give nor take away, *be* good, and *do* good. Do something for somebody. Help a neighbour to carry his burden. Make someone else happy, that is the surest way to be happy yourself. He who is busy in trying to do God's Will, and to make some one else's life brighter, will have no time for murmuring or despondency; he will be able to say—

"My hands and feet were swift to do
The good that near them lay;
And in my heart throughout the year
The joy-bird sang each day."

You say, perhaps, that you are small and of no reputation, that you cannot do anything for Christ and His Church. We can all do *something*, it may be a little thing, but if God requires of us only a little, let us do our diligence to give gladly of that little. Look

at that rose tree climbing up that cottage wall. It is not a rare or valuable rose, only a common flower, but it makes that cottage beautiful and sweet, because it does what God meant it to do. So with your life. It may be very humble and insignificant, but if you try to do what God wills, if you do your duty, you will make things sweeter and brighter and happier around you. A good man or woman in a place is like the rose tree on the wall, there is nothing so beautiful or so sweet as goodness. The man in the parable who had only one talent, hid it in the earth, and let it lie useless, because it was only one, and you know how he was punished. God has given some of us only one talent because we have not the capacity to use more. Let us make the most of that. You may say—If I had five talents, if I had eloquence, or influence, or learning, or money, I would work for Christ; I would go out as a missionary, I would preach from pulpit or platform. As it is I can do so little, it is not worth while. Yes it is, everything that we do for God is worth while. You can be Christ's missionary without going abroad, without having money, or eloquence, or influence. You can be a missionary at home in your parish, and these are often the best of all missionaries. You can preach the best of all sermons without mounting pulpit or platform, let your example be your sermon. A clean, well-kept house is a sermon all the year round, so is a sober, decent life, so is a sweet, kindly temper. Never undervalue the little things which we do for others. A

very small thing may be a blessing, a life-long blessing to some one. We sow a bed of sweet flowers in our garden, a little thing, a trifle, but the perfume goes over the wall to our neighbour, and makes his house fragrant. A word of sympathy and love, a song of tender music, are little things, but they may comfort a breaking heart, or soothe a sorrowful spirit. Let our prayer be that the Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts. Then we shall be able to do God's Will, and to have that joy which no man can take from us.

Sermon IV.

THE DUTY OF JOYFULNESS.

PHILIPPIANS IV. 4.

" Rejoice in the Lord alway."



JOYFULNESS is not only a blessed thing, but it is a distinct duty. God expects His people to rejoice as much as He expects His sun to shine and His birds to sing. We know a piece of gold or silver plate by the mark of the goldsmith's hall upon it. We know a genuine Christian by the mark of a happy, rejoicing nature. He who is always murmuring, complaining, fault-finding, despairing, is no true child of God. S. Paul bids us to rejoice in *the Lord* always ; under all circumstances, in all times and places. He does not merely say—Rejoice alway. We know that this world is full of sorrows, and that the path of most men's lives is wet with tears. It is impossible for us to be always rejoicing, in the common sense of the word ; it is impossible for our mouths to be always filled with laughter or singing. The flowers we rejoiced in yesterday are withered to-day, the hand which clasped ours

so warmly but lately, is cold and still in death. Our rejoicing must be in the *Lord*, the holy joy of resignation, of gratitude, of faith, of love, of active service ; in this way we can rejoice always.

The holiest and best of God's people are ever urging us to rejoice. Look at the Psalms of David. They bid us over and over again to sing merrily unto God, to make a cheerful noise unto the Lord, to bring the tabret and harp, to praise God with the best member that we have. In the time of sorrow and trouble David has a word of cheer for us : "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me ? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance." David had his dark days as we all have ; we all have to sing our fifty-first Psalm at times, there comes to us all a cloudy day when we say, "Out of the deep have I cried unto Thee, O God." But we do not cease to rejoice in the Lord. We do not cease to love the divine hand which chastens us. We learn to say, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Thou shalt make me to hear of joy and gladness, that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice."

To be joyful in the Lord is a duty. Some people think that religion and gloom must go together, that prayers and sighs belong naturally to each other. They tell you it is wrong to rejoice and be happy here, we must wait for Heaven. Nothing can be more false than this teaching. If we never learn to rejoice in the

Lord here, there is little chance of our seeing Him face to face in His eternal and everlasting Kingdom. Believe me, we must begin to practise here on earth if we are ever to take part in the praises of Heaven.

To be joyful in the Lord is a duty because it enables us to work for God with all our might, and God loves a cheerful giver and a cheerful worker. God expects us to serve Him with a merry heart and a happy face, not in gloom and discontent, like the convicts in a chain gang. No work is ever so well done as cheerful work, work in which our heart is. In a certain battle the soldiers went into action singing a godly song lustily. An officer asked the commander if he should stop them, and the answer was, "Certainly not, men who can sing like that are sure to fight well." If we would conquer in the battle of life, if we would resist the attacks of the enemy, and climb over the many difficulties in our road, let us go on our way rejoicing, singing the Lord's song, the praises of God in our mouths.

"Rejoice in the Lord always." But someone asks—How am I to rejoice always, see what I have had to go through? Then rejoice that the good Lord has brought you through; you would not be here to-day, and able to tell people about your troubles, if the Lord had not been very good to you. Another says—How can I rejoice, think of my losses? I answer—If you have not lost faith and trust in Jesus Christ, all the rest is as nothing. If you have kept that which alone will go

with you beyond the grave, and last through all eternity, nothing else matters. You tell me that you cannot rejoice, that you have known many sorrows which have left their mark upon you. There is all the more reason for your rejoicing. Those are the marks of God's school which tell you that He has been treating you as His own children. They show you that you have not been forgotten, and left out uncared for in the world; learn to look on the traces of sorrow as being the prints of the nails, the signs that you are partakers of the Cross of Christ.

“Rejoice in the Lord alway.” You tell me, perhaps, that there is nothing to rejoice about in your way of life; it is a dull, commonplace existence. So are most of our lives. It is only the few who stand in the front rank of the battle, who occupy a place of power or importance. As you walk in the country, here and there you see a great oak tree spreading its boughs towards Heaven, but chiefly you see the homely grass growing thick around you. Well, God's grass has its place, and its use, and its work in the world as well as the great tree. We ought to do our duty, and rejoice in doing it, though our position in life is as humble as the lowly grass. Life is mainly made up of little commonplace acts and duties, and by doing them faithfully we glorify God as much as an angel in Heaven. Rejoice in the Lord, and consecrate the common things of daily life to His service. Someone says very truly—

" 'A commonplace life ' we say, and we sigh,
But why should we sigh as we say ?
The commonplace sun in the commonplace sky
Makes up the commonplace day.
The moon and the stars are commonplace things,
And the flower that blooms, and the bird that sings ;
But dark were the world and sad our lot,
If the flower failed, and the sun shone not."

It is out of the commonplace things of daily life that God makes up a beautiful and harmonious universe. No one need go outside his home, or his work, or business in order to serve and glorify God. No one need seek happiness afar off, he can find it close at hand ; let him rejoice in the Lord, and do his duty in the place where God puts him, and he will be contented and happy. It is the people who are always looking about for a sphere of work, and neglecting that which lies at their feet, who are unhappy. There is a legend of a saint of God, who dwelt in a monastery long ago, and determined one morning to do three distinct pieces of work that day to the glory of God. Before he could commence the first piece of work he was summoned from a neighbouring convent to teach a novice how to paint. Patiently he sat down beside the pupil, and instructed him, leaving his own special task undone. When the lesson was ended, and the pupil gone, the monk turned eagerly to his appointed work ; but just then a mother came with her sick child, and asked his aid. For hours he watched beside the sufferer, giving relief. Then the bell rang for vespers, and the day was

nearly done. Vespers over, the monk hastened once more to his work, but a brother monk sought him with his tale of sorrow, and poured out his story till the night came. Sad at heart the saint lay down to sleep, feeling that he had not done the three things which he had meditated to do to the glory of God. Then in a dream the Lord appeared to him, and told him how He had that day been thrice glorified by the loving service of the monk, who, in helping others, and doing his plain duty, had done it unto God. Each day brings us its duties, and they seem to us sometimes common and uninteresting, and we neglect them ; but if we could only see clearly, we should find that each commonplace duty hides a crown of glory, waiting for us to wear it if we will.

“Rejoice in the Lord always.” We may be quite sure that there are no black looks or miserable faces among the angels in Heaven, and here, amid the sorrows and troubles of earth, God would have His people to rejoice. You think, perhaps, that there is so much misery in the world, that it is impossible for you to rejoice. Not so, if you keep close to God. We often notice that people who live together for a long time grow very like each other. If we live always close to God, we shall catch something of the divine features. The face of Moses shone with dazzling brightness after he had been face to face with God. The more we approach the Lord in earnest prayer, in holy meditation, in service and sacrament, the more the divine

light of joy, and peace, and happiness will sparkle on our faces. In all you do, keep close to God. Those who live in the sunshine, show it in their faces. Those who work in the deep, black mine, far from the light of day, show it in their faces. Brethren, if we live and work close to Jesus, the Light of the world, He will make the light of His countenance to shine upon us, we shall show it in our faces.

“Rejoice in the Lord always.” Do not be discouraged because you often fall and make mistakes, the best of us do that. Only try your best, doing all as unto the Lord, and then leave the rest to Him.

“As the mite the widow offered,
Brought blessing sweet and rare,
And all the treasures of Dives
Were not worth a pauper's prayer,
So I smile when men mark 'Failure'
O'er the life of any man,
For the greatest of all greatness
Is to do the best we can.”

Remember that no one becomes a good Christian, any more than he becomes a good painter, all at once. A gentle, patient, happy follower of Jesus is not born so. Someone asked a very famous musician how long it would take to become a real master of the art, and he answered, all your life, with constant practice every day. It is the same in the Christian life, we must practise the duties of holiness all our days and every day. The ladder from earth to Heaven has a great

many steps in it, and it will take us all our time to climb to the top, only we must *keep on climbing*. Do not be discouraged because you make mistakes. If you watch an artist learning to draw, or a musician to play an instrument of music, you will see that they make many errors. The one is obliged to rub out his drawing over and over again, and start afresh. My brethren, we all make many mistakes, but if we repent us truly of our faults, God will rub out the crooked lines in our work, and let us start again. That musician who plays so wonderfully to-day, began by picking out the notes one after another, by making many discords, by striking the notes over and over again, till the melody was found. We must persevere till our lives are in tune with the Will of God.

Yes, it is the *little* notes which make up the divine harmony of life. If we can be good Christians in the small commonplace things of daily existence, I do not care anything about the great things. Some young artists when they are quite inexperienced, buy a great canvas, and determine to paint a huge picture. But they soon find that they have undertaken too big a task, and they end in failure. The wise artist takes one small work at a time, and tries to do it very well. So with our religion; we need not be ambitious of doing some wonderful thing, or occupying some conspicuous place: let us put all our Christianity into the little duties of daily life; let our religion be the *first* thing with us, the mainspring of all we do. Then we


shall be happy, able to rejoice in the Lord. Sorrows we shall know, trials we shall meet with, but we shall go on our way rejoicing, as a happy man will walk smiling through a storm. Do you know why so many people around us are miserable, gloomy, discontented? Because they live in a house where God is not; because they lead a life with no religion in it. My brethren, would you have this holy joy which makes even a troubled life happy? Then ask, and you shall have. Pray that the Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule your hearts. Pray for the blessed fruit of the Spirit, that joy which no man taketh from you. "Rejoice in the Lord alway."

Sermon V.

HOLY JOY.

ROMANS XV. 13.

"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing."

T is marvellous what wrong ideas some people have about God and religion. They seem to think that God's Will is to make everyone sad and miserable, and that religion shuts us out from all merriment and amusement. Such people always put on mourning when they go to Church, as though they were attending the funeral of all their hopes and pleasures ; the Bible to them is a sad book, which they do not love, but read with a gloomy sense of duty. In olden days there were those who thought it was a sign of superior holiness if they wore a hair shirt and tormented their body. There are people now whose whole religion is like a hair shirt, it makes them wretched. And these mistaken people do a great deal of harm. They present God and the duties of religion in a wrong way, so that many are disgusted with, or frightened at, the idea of being followers of God, and refuse to have anything to do with a religion which makes men miserable. I can quite understand those who have had this

false picture of God's service put before them declining to accept it. As many a man is made a coward for life by being frightened in childhood by ignorant and foolish nurses, so many a one is made an unbeliever and a scoffer because God and the Church and the Gospel are shown to him in a false light, and painted in false colours. Such people shrink back with dislike from God's priest as from one who is an enemy to all happiness, and carefully avoid all reference to sacred things, as belonging to the sick room and the dying bed ; they look on a Church as something very sad, or very gloomy, or very depressing. No mistake can be greater. All true joy comes from God. He is the God of hope, of love, of happiness, of rejoicing. The happiest people are God's people. The strongest people are those of whom it can be said, "The joy of the Lord is your strength." There are no such brave hearts and strong wills and ready hands as among those who serve the Lord God. There are none who bear burdens so patiently, who fight with evil so courageously, who climb over difficulties so manfully, as those who trust in the Lord. If you would see the brightest faces, and hear the cheeriest voices, you must look amongst God's people. They may have known many trials and losses and sorrows, but they have never ceased to rejoice in the Lord. Such an one can say with truth—

"I did not dread life's care and toil,
Thy love dispelled all gloom ;
And now on graves of buried hopes
The sweetest violets bloom."

True joy is the gift of God. It is the gift of the Holy Ghost, "the fruit of the Spirit is joy," it comes, like every other good and perfect gift, from above. It is a joy which starts from Heaven, and lightens and cheers us upon earth, just as a sunbeam does. S. Paul's prayer for his people is, "The God of hope fill you with all joy and hope in believing."

Since this joy comes from God, it is divine, and is mainly concerned with God. We rejoice in *Him*, we are happy because there *is* a God. We rejoice because the world does not take care of itself, and because the events of our life do not happen by chance or haphazard; we believe that everything is ordered and directed by an all-wise and all-loving God. We do not look upon our life as a mere lottery, but as a perfectly ordered scheme, in which all things work together for good for those who fear God. We believe that the same Father, without Whom not a sparrow falls, knows all about our necessities, and will give us what is best for us. It may seem difficult for us sometimes to rejoice in a God Whom we cannot see, One Who dwells in the high and holy place, far beyond all principalities and powers. But when we learn to call God our *Father* we seem to draw near to Him, we are no longer only looking up to a King on His splendid throne, but nestling in the arms of a tender Parent. The loving child is ever the first to recognize the step of his father, and to cry out a welcome. Strive, my brethren, to realize the *fatherhood* of God, try to enter fully into the meaning of

those blessed words, "Our Father, Which art in Heaven," listen, as it were, for God's step in all the events of your life, then shall you learn to say—What my Father does is well, it is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him right.

Again, we rejoice because God has manifested Himself to us by His Son. We might be blinded or dazzled if we could only see God by looking up into Heaven, but we can in the Gospels read the wondrous story of Christ's coming here among men, and therefore we rejoice. When we realize that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, took our nature upon Him, and became man, and is man now, we seem to be able to get close to God. Brethren, is the Gospel a happy book to you, do you rejoice in all that gracious story of love, and patience, and pardon? Is there a mother here to-day? Let her rejoice that she can put her child to-day into the arms of Jesus, even as those mothers did of old, and that the same Lord will say of her child now, "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." Is there one here to-day weary and heavy laden? Let him rejoice that the same Jesus calls him to-day and says, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." You can draw near to Him now in prayer; when you pray earnestly you are resting on the breast of Jesus, like the beloved Apostle long ago. Is there one here afflicted with some besetting sin, yet anxious to be healed? One who says like that sorrowful woman of old, "If I may but touch the hem of His garment, I shall be made whole?"

I say to you—Rejoice, for you can touch, not the hem of His garment only, but the Lord Himself. Draw near with faith, never mind how the crowd tries to hinder you, touch Jesus, spiritually present in His Sacrament, and you shall be made whole. O weary soul, sad with the sense of all your sin, rejoice, for your sins shall be forgiven you. Jesus is here present in His Church, He, the great Absolver, is ready to receive you, if you come penitent you shall go pardoned, wherefore rejoice. Have you ever seen a prisoner sitting hopeless and wretched in his cell, and have you noticed the change in that man when he suddenly received the news that he was pardoned? That sad-eyed, dejected prisoner now leaps with joy, and shouts aloud with exultation, he has the Queen's pardon in his hand. So is it with you and me. Jesus has come and preached deliverance to the captives, He has broken the bars of iron asunder, and thrown open the prison doors, and we can cry—I have the King's pardon in my hand, the Blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. Try to understand all that Jesus has done, and is doing for you, and you cannot help rejoicing.

Again, we rejoice because we belong to God's great family, the Church. We are not like strangers and emigrants here in a foreign land, we dwell among our own people, we are all one in Christ Jesus. When the Colonial troops were in London for the Queen's Jubilee, two soldiers of widely different race and country were seen talking together. One was asked what topic of

common interest they could find to talk about, and he answered proudly, "We both serve the same Queen." There is the golden link which binds all members of the Church together. We all serve the same Lord Jesus.

Then our rejoicing in the Lord makes us strong to *work* for Him. An unwilling soldier will never make a good fighter, a discontented servant will never work well. If we are going to do our religious duties like convicts working in chains, we shall never do them properly. If we love the Lord Jesus and rejoice in Him, no work will be too hard, no self-sacrifice too great, no suffering too keen. A kindly and loving person does not keep all the good things of life to himself, he shares them with others, and so makes them happy. My brethren, if you have got the best of all things—a rejoicing, happy faith in Jesus Christ, share it with others; do not keep all the praises and the joy to yourself, let the sunshine of your religion in upon the darkened room of the sad and the suffering. If you really rejoice in the Lord, you will try to make others happy. A writer of a bygone day speaks of *fire-side saints*, simple, loving, holy folk, who make home happy. He tells of one whom he calls S. Jenny. She was the wife of a poor man, and they had scarcely bread enough to keep them, yet Jenny was so sweet-tempered that even in times of want she always smiled. In the worst seasons she could always spare crumbs for the birds and sugar for the bees. It so happened that

one autumn a storm rent their little cabin asunder, and there appeared between the joists, from basement to roof, nothing but honeycomb and honey, a little fortune for Jenny and her husband. Blessed are these fireside saints, whose loving temper fills the home with sweetness, and teaches others to rejoice in the Lord.

If you rejoice in the Lord you will try to cheer and comfort those who are in sorrow and suffering. There are people who come into a sick room like a sunbeam, making all things bright. When they go they seem to leave a sweetness behind them like the sweetness of flowers. They know when to speak, and when to keep silence, and how to drop a cheery word which echoes like music long afterwards. We are nearest to the angels when we visit God's sad ones, and teach them to rejoice in the Lord. What we do may seem a mere trifle, the words we speak in that sick chamber may be very few and very simple, but if they are full of love for God and our fellow-men they cannot fall to the ground. It has been said, "We never know how small a thing may become a benediction to a human life." And another says, "When men do anything for God—the very least thing—they never can know where it will end, nor what amount of work it will do for Him."

Brethren, try to make others happy, and you will be happy yourselves. What have you to do with gloom, and doubt, and discontent; if you love the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe in His promises, there is nothing for you but rejoicing. Gloom and melancholy are very

infectious diseases, and some people, whose religion is a misery to them, make their friends and acquaintances as wretched as themselves. I would have you all to be rejoicing Christians, people who infect others with your happiness, who show to all men that there is nothing so happy and blessed as a life lived in the active service of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lastly, our rejoicing in the Lord makes us strong to *suffer for Him*. There is no such hero as the Christian. He looks upon his sorrows from a different point of view from the rest of the world. They take him to Calvary, and give him a cross. We all have our Calvary and our crucifixion. For one it is a life full of ill-health and suffering. There is our Calvary, in that sick room. There is our cross, that bed of suffering. For another it is bereavement. Our house is left unto us desolate; we see the forms of those we love carried one after another across the threshold, and we are left alone in the silent home. But we know it is our Calvary, and we bow our heads and say, "Thy Will be done." And these sorrows do not rob us of our joy, we can sing God's praises though our eyes are full of tears, "as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing."

I have read of a little boy who was terribly injured by an accident, and rendered a cripple for life. He had been foremost in all games of action and skill, and had had a bright career before him. Now he was compelled to lie all day in bed with irons upon his limbs. At first the boy was very impatient and rebellious under this

restraint. Then someone gave him a bird in a wire cage, and the bird would sing blithely all day long. Then the boy thought—We are both of us in a cage, but I murmur and complain, and the bird sings happily; surely that is best. And so in time the boy grew more patient and happy, though weaker day by day, and at last the child opened the cage door, and as the bird flew up into the sky singing, the spirit of the other prisoner went to God, and both were rejoicing in the Lord.

Sermon VI.

PERFECT PEACE.

S. JOHN XIV. 27.

"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."



TO understand rightly the blessing of peace we must have known the horrors of war. During the early years of this century a thick cloud of anxiety hung over England. The time was full of wars and rumours of war. France, Spain, America were our enemies. Nearly every flag which flew upon the sea was that of a foe. A great shadow lay upon the fields and homes of Britain. Men feared lest Napoleon, the greatest conqueror of his age, should suddenly invade our island as he had threatened, and bring his victorious armies to devast our homes. So the talk was all of wars and fightings, men were taken away from their peaceful farms and quiet work to buckle on the sword, and fight for England as soldiers and sailors. This brought a great deal of sorrow and misery into English homes. There was scarcely a

house where some woman was not praying for husband, brother, or son fighting upon the Continent or the seas; there was scarcely a family which had not lost some member in the cruel war. Then one day messengers came with news, from mouth to mouth one word passed, that word was *peace*. The dark cloud was lifted, the shadow was gone. Throughout the length and breadth of the land the Church bells rang merry peals, neighbours clasped hands and talked eagerly on one subject, peace. Parents and children were looking forward eagerly to see their dear ones return home, to see the sword hung up upon the wall, and the torn, stained colours placed in the Minster, to feel that God had given His people the blessing of peace.

Yes, it is those who have known the horrors of war who most appreciate the gift of peace. The landsman who lives in security on shore knows not that peace which comes to the sailor who fights his way through the tempest, and at last passes the harbour bar in safety, and reaches the haven where he would be. It is to the sad and broken-hearted that a loving word of hope and sympathy sounds most sweet, and so it is to the sinner who is penitent, and to the sufferer amid the troublesome waves of this world, that our Saviour's message is most precious, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

First, Jesus promises that blessing of peace to *those who have been through the war with sin and temptation*. The soldier who never saw a battle-field cannot appreciate really what peace means. The man who has never put on the whole armour of God, and fought with the world, and the flesh, and the devil, cannot understand what the peace of God is like. The self-righteous, self-satisfied man, who thanks God that he is not as other men, cannot realize the awful struggle against temptation, cannot say with the Apostle, "I have fought a good fight," or appreciate the promise of the Saviour, "My peace I give unto you." The wandering sheep who has strayed far and wandered over the dark mountains understands most fully the tender love of the shepherd, the blessed peace of the fold. The prodigal who has been in the far country among strangers, who has starved among the husks, can tell you best how precious are the peace and safety of his father's house.

Many a son has left home and gone to sea, or elsewhere out into the world alone, and when he has realized the hardship and the misery of his lot, he has looked back sadly and longingly to the past, and sighed for his father's voice and his mother's tender love, and has confessed, "I wish I were at home again." Well, it was to weak, sinful men, not to self-righteous Pharisees, that our Lord gave His promise of peace. He spoke to His disciples, to such men as S. Peter, who in the hour of trial thrice denied his Lord, to S. Thomas,

who doubted of his Master's resurrection, to men who in the moment of extreme danger forsook Him and fled. If there be any here who think they are among the ninety and nine which need no repentance, who have wrapped themselves up in self-righteousness as in a cloak, who condemn the mote in their brother's eye, but are unconscious of the beam in their own eye, then this sermon is not for them. The Lord's promise of peace is not for them. As they have never realized their sin, and never fought with it, they cannot say—Thanks be to God Who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ; as they never knew war, they cannot value peace. I speak to those who know their sinfulness, who feel that they have erred and strayed like the lost sheep, that they have been in the far country with the prodigal, that the enemy has thrust sore at them that they might fall, who have known what it is to fight on their knees with the devils of drink, and lust, and anger grappling them. I speak to those who have quitted themselves, and are quitting themselves, like men, and fighting with temptation; those who have been able to stand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. To you, my brethren, often sorely tried and tempted, I bring the blessed promise of the Master, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you."

And notice, next, that this promised peace is different from all other. It is the gift of God. "My peace I give unto you." "The peace of God which passeth

all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." "The fruit of the Spirit is peace." You see, then, that this peace is not of earthly manufacture. Jesus says, "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you." The world has a kind of peace which it can give, but it is not true and genuine. It can give a man great wealth, it can teach him to say to his soul that he has much goods laid up for many years, that he has nothing to do but to eat and drink and enjoy himself, and the world calls this peace. But one night the message comes to the man of wealth—Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee. And he has never thought about his soul, or of death, and the judgment which comes after. Of what use are thousands of gold and silver to a man who has no God? Of what use are his acres of land to one whose body must shortly lie in six feet of ground, and who can carry nothing away with him when he dies? Of what use are all the comforts and luxuries bestowed upon a body which must soon be dust, while the ever-living soul has been forgotten? Such an one may have riches, power, comfort for a time, but he has not peace.

The world can give a man pleasure and self-indulgence. It whispers—Eat, drink, and be merry. It bids a man drown care in strong drink, forget troubles in excitement and dissipation. And he does forget for a time, but he does not find peace. As he lies waking upon his bed, in the long still watches of the night, memories

of his past, like ghosts, come around him, and "murder sleep." His thoughts trouble him. He thinks—If I were to die to-night, what would become of me? I believe that I have a soul, though I have thought only of my body; if I were to die now, my soul would go forth into the unseen like a ship sailing at midnight into the dark. Such a man has not peace. As he draws nearer to the end of life, as the shadows darken about him, the world and the friendship of the world grow less dear to him, the drunkard's glass, the gambler's cards, are not for those thin shaking hands now, he wants peace, something which the world cannot give.

The world can give a man a long spell of amusement, gay society, frivolous pleasure, but it cannot give him peace, and shut out the grisly skeleton which sits down at the brightest feast. The world can give Belshazzar his wine and his concubines, but it cannot hide the awful handwriting upon the wall. So many a one who lives a mere worldly, selfish, godless life seems to see a ghostly sentence on the wall of banqueting hall or ball room, there is an aching heart beneath the gay dress of the dancer, there is no peace.

The world can, and often does, give its followers an opiate in the shape of doubt and unbelief. It sneers at the Bible, it mocks at the teaching of God's Church, it tells people that if they would be happy they must not believe these old wives' fables, these worn-out superstitions of a bygone age. It bids men enjoy life and not fret about the future. But such teaching does

not give peace. There are times when the most careless and unbelieving is obliged to be serious and to think. He is brought face to face with the great mystery of death, and the other mysteries of judgment and eternity come into his thoughts, and he is forced to ask—What if the Church and the Bible are right after all, and I am wrong? Such an one does not know peace. No, the world may be able to give wealth, or sensual pleasure, or dissipation, or heedless forgetfulness, but it cannot give peace. Jesus Christ alone can give us that peace of God which passeth all understanding.

What, then, is this peace? For one thing it is not the idle confidence of those who have laid aside their armour and let their spiritual weapons grow rusty. Many people who talk about having found perfect peace, are merely fast asleep, and talking in their sleep. When a man tells you that he is dead to the world, that he is not afraid of any temptation, that he is quite safe, he is simply like a man under the influence of chloroform, the devil has put him to sleep, if he talks he does not know what he is talking about. If you see a man sleeping in a powder magazine with a lighted candle beside him, you do not say that he has found peace. You do not talk of one finding peace, who walks in his sleep, and goes over a precipice. No, those only who are keeping their watch, and are fighting with the enemies of the soul, can be said to have found peace. David had the peace of God in his heart, but

he had plenty of fighting to do. It was when he had put his sword into its sheath, and retired from warfare, that he fell into grievous sin. So with us. There are worse foes than Amalekites and Philistines around us, and if we would have the peace of God in our hearts we must sign no peace with them. The life of every true Christian is a life of prayer, of watching, lest he enter into temptation. A life of struggle with the evil inside him and outside him, and it is just when he is most active in prayer, in watching, in fighting, that he has the most perfect peace in his heart.

Then the peace of God which Jesus gives us makes us perfectly *brave* under all circumstances. The most truly courageous man is he who has perfect trust in God, and therefore does not fear what man can do unto him. In the Indian Mutiny there were no better soldiers than Havelock's praying, God-fearing troops. They tell us how General Gordon was sent to interview a King, notorious for his cruelty and savage nature. The great soldier went alone into the King's presence, though he knew that he carried his life in his hands. Fearlessly he refused the savage Prince's proposals. "Do you know," said he, "that I could have you killed instantly?" "I know it perfectly well," was Gordon's answer, "but it is a matter of perfect indifference to me." That man had the peace of God in his heart, so nothing could frighten him. He who has not this peace is always fearful of to-morrow, over-anxious about his affairs, cumbered with much serving, careful

and troubled about many things, generally unhappy.

He who has the peace of God in his heart, has perfect trust in God; he puts each day into the Lord's Hand, and he knows that all will be ordered for the best. He tries to do his duty and the work which God has given him to do, but he does not try to alter the course of the world lest it should not go round properly. He has perfect faith that God can and will take care of His own world and His own people. Nothing comes amiss to him whose mind is stayed on God, and who has therefore perfect peace. If riches increase he does not set his heart upon them, but thanks God for sending them, and asks to be shown how best to employ them. If he is poor he thanks God for such things as he has, and remembers that his Master became poor to provide him with treasure in Heaven. If great trouble comes upon him he does not try to bear it alone, he shares it with God, he casts his burden upon the Lord, knowing that He careth for him. If someone dear to him is smitten with sickness he prays fervently to God for him, but he does not grieve as men without hope. If the loved one is taken he feels that it is well with him, and he can say—I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me. If pain and sickness come to him he knows that they are but thorns from the Master's crown, sent to teach him more faith and patience. If death comes to him the peace is not disturbed, he knows that the Lord is his Shepherd, and will lead him through the valley of the shadow, he dies with the

happy assurance on his lips—I believe in the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

Many of you, dear brethren, are troubled about many things. I see careworn faces in this congregation, as I do in many others. I want you to understand that the peace which Jesus gives takes away all nervous doubt and anxiety. “Perfect love casteth out fear.” If you love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity He will give you this peace, and there is no more cause for fear. Some of you, perhaps, are sending out your boy or girl into the wide world, and you are anxious about the future of your child. You wonder whether he will be strong enough to resist temptation, to keep from the evil which will surely assail him after he has flown from the home nest. Some of you, perhaps, are thinking of that sick one at home, laid upon his bed, and you doubt and tremble for the future. Just trust God. Put your trouble in the Lord’s Hand. Pray hard and trust strongly. You say, perhaps—I wish I had this peace of God which you tell me of. Then ask for it. No one ever asked a good thing of God which he did not receive. If you want that peace, ask, and you shall have. Believe the word of the Lord Jesus, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth, give I unto you.”

Sermon VII.

SURE CONFIDENCE.

S. JOHN XIV. 27.

"Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."



OME people have made a vast fortune by discovering a remedy for some painful disease. What a reward would await the man who could find out the cure for a troubled spirit, or a fearful heart. But that may not be, no mere man can do that. And yet I tell you, my brethren, that there is such a remedy, a medicine to heal that sickness. Is there one here now whose heart is troubled and afraid? I can tell him of the remedy, but it is God's cure not man's! Our Lord Jesus Christ tells us that if we will only trust Him perfectly, and put all our wants and cares and wishes into His Hands, He will give us such peace of mind, such confidence and faith in Him, that our hearts will not be troubled or afraid. Surely that is the medicine which we need most. Many a one has an aching heart, who never felt pain elsewhere. Many a one has a healthy body, but a troubled, anxious mind. Yes, this is a kind of heart disease which is

very common. Now understand plainly that there is no necessity for us to be troubled and fearful at heart. Our Lord Jesus Christ says, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." He would not have said that unless He had the means of easing our troubles and quieting our fears. You may say to me—No one can help troubling or being afraid sometimes, it is human nature. Yes, but not sanctified human nature, not a nature which has perfect faith in God. If you are ill with some bodily sickness, and you do not trust your doctor, or do what he tells you, you cannot expect to be cured. So when troubles and trials and dangers come to you, as they surely will in this world, you cannot expect to have a brave and untroubled heart if you have not perfect faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Everything turns upon that. If our faith is real, and not mere talk, if we can and do trust God entirely, then we shall know nothing of troubled hearts and coward spirits.

Jesus has left with us *peace*, thus we are bidden, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." He has left us the *peace of pardon*, the peace of mind which comes from knowing that our sins are forgiven us. What ought we to fear most? Surely sin and the consequences of sin. It matters not what else we lose if we are not lost ourselves. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Now we all know that we have sinned, and that we often do sin through our weakness. We know

also that unrepented sin is unforgiven sin, and that for all unforgiven sin we shall be brought into judgment. You say, perhaps, that you have repented of your sin, and that you hope that God has forgiven you. But hoping is not enough. If you were in prison you might hope that you were going to be pardoned and set at liberty, but that would not be the same as finding the prison door open, and your feet standing free outside. You want to be *sure* that your sin is pardoned. When the governor of the prison comes and reads to a prisoner the order for his discharge, the Queen's pardon, he is no longer doubting or hoping, he is sure. We sinners who have repented truly want to hear a message from Almighty God, telling us that we are pardoned. This message comes to us in the Absolution. Our Lord Jesus Christ has left power with His Church to pronounce the forgiveness of sins to all who truly repent. It is the pardon of our Heavenly Father pronounced by the lips of His priests here on earth. If we know that we have truly repented, and unfeignedly believe the promises of the Gospel, we are certain that our sin is forgiven as soon as the Absolution is spoken. We do not say "I hope," or "I trust," we say, "I believe—I know." Thus, when Jesus Christ promised to leave peace with His people, He meant that He would leave them the pardon of their sins. Brethren, set a right value upon the Absolution. You are familiar with its words, but have you ever thought what they mean? They are the binding or unloosening of the

chain of your sins, according as you have or have not truly repented. If you can know that your sin is forgiven, what else can trouble you? If a traveller has a case of valuable jewels with him, he takes care to keep it close to him. He does not trouble himself much about his other luggage as long as he has the precious treasure safe. So if we can feel that we have the best of all possessions, the pardon of our sins, we shall not, in the journey of life, be over anxious about anything else.

Next, Jesus has *left us His peace in the Sacrament*, the last earthly gift of His love—His dying gift. Ah, you who never come to the Altar do not know what you lose. When the sailor is in trouble and perplexity as he draws near home, and the storm comes down fiercely upon him, he looks eagerly for the harbour lights, for there he knows lies safety, and there are friends waiting for him. So we who are daily nearing the end of our earthly journey, should look to the Altar as our harbour of refuge; there is comfort, there is a Friend waiting for us, One Who will say, "It is I, be not afraid. My peace I give unto you."

Again, Jesus has *left us His peace in a perfect trust and confidence in Him*, so that whatever trials may come to us we can hear Him saying, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." God's people mostly have to go through the hottest fire of affliction, and to suffer most, just as the most precious stone has to bear the sharpest cutting and the hardest polishing. To be

a true follower of Christ does not mean to be free from sorrows, but it does mean to have strength to bear them rightly. God does not tell His people that they shall be kept from all troubles, but He *does* tell them that they shall be brought safely through all. The story of Job is written for our learning. It was said of him, "Hast not Thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?" It was Satan who said that, but the Devil spoke truth for once. Job was bitterly tried and bereaved, but the hedge of God's love and protection was around him all the same. So it is with you, my brethren, though the storms beat upon you, the hedge is there, you are safe.

Jesus has left us His peace in the shape of *prayer*. He has taught us that nothing can really harm us as long as we hold fast to earnest, constant, faithful prayer. That keeps up the hedge around God's people. When men are camping out in a wild country, they surround themselves at night with a circle of fire, within which no dangerous beast or reptile can come. So we have the circle of prayer, like holy fire, around us by day and night, and no real evil can happen to us. When the French, under Napoleon, were retreating from Moscow, the half-starved, half-frozen, defeated soldiers were a terror to all the towns and villages through which they passed, for they spared none. In a lonely house, on the borders of a little German town, an aged woman and her two grandchildren were alone and unprotected, and the soldiers were marching their way.

They had no means of defending themselves against the foe, but they committed themselves to God in prayer, and as they waited for the coming of the soldiers they sang a hymn—

"O God, till darkness goeth hence
Be Thou our stay and our defence;
A wall, when foes oppress us sore,
To save and guard us evermore."

And so they waited, expecting each moment to hear the sound of the French bugles. Presently the wind began to rise, and then the snow fell thick about the house; hour after hour passed by, and they were undisturbed, though they could hear the faint sound of the enemy's bugles. Next day they found that their house had been surrounded by a wall of snow, which hid it completely from the soldiers who had come and gone. The Lord hears the prayers of His people, and makes a hedge about them, and about their house, and about all that they have on every side.

Then Jesus has left us His peace *in the Bible*. You who seldom or never read your Bible little know how much poorer you are for your neglect. There are people who are fretting and worrying themselves to death who would find heart's-ease and comfort if they would read oftener in God's Book. Jesus has left you the Bible as a precious legacy, something to remind you of Him, to keep you in touch with Him. If some dear friend is taken away from us, or parted by a long distance, we love to look on his picture and recall his

features, to read his letters, or the book which he wrote, or the song which he sang. These things keep us close to him. In the Bible we have a picture of our Friend and Master, Jesus, we can read His message to us, we can find the secret of peace, the only cure for the heartache. There are people in these days who tell us that the Bible is an old worn-out Book, and they offer us something more modern and more scientific; but we can say—If these people have nothing to offer which is better than the Sermon on the Mount, or the stories of the Prodigal and the Good Samaritan; if they can give us no code of morals better than the Ten Commandments, and nothing more consoling and beautiful than the twenty-third Psalm, we would keep to the old Bible.

Again, Jesus has left us peace in the form of *resignation to God's Will*. No one can find peace who is fighting against God. Some birds when they are caged will sing gaily, and bear their captivity with patience. Others will continually dash themselves against the bars of their cage, till they are bruised to death. Now men and women are like those birds. Prisoned here in the flesh, some accept God's Will, whatever it is, and come before His Presence with a song. Others are in a constant state of rebellion against Him, and they destroy themselves by struggling with the inevitable. People meet their troubles in very different ways. One meets it swearing, another meets it praying. He who has perfect trust in God prays over his diffi-

culties and anxieties, he puts the trouble into God's Hands, then he can bear the worst. It is written in one of the Psalms, "He shall not be afraid of any evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." We are not told that we shall not receive any evil tidings, but that we shall not be afraid of them. Job received message after message, and each seemed worse news than the last. Our evil tidings often take the same form. No one, perhaps, can help a little fluttering at the heart, or a little catching of the breath, as he opens the telegram, so brief yet so eloquent, sometimes, of trouble. No one can help feeling sometimes as though the news had stunned him, as though he had received a sudden blow. But he who puts his trust in the Lord, who has prayer ever ready on his lips and in his heart, will not be overwhelmed, "he shall not be afraid of any evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord."

Perhaps the evil tidings come to us, as they did to Job, that our child is taken from us, or smitten with illness. It would be inhuman, unnatural, if we did not feel sorrow at the loss, or anxiety for the sick one, but to the man whose trust is in the Lord, there comes the peace of resignation, and he learns to say with the Patriarch, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

Or the evil tidings may be that our money is gone, that we are reduced to poverty, and that our schemes and speculations have failed. The man who has no

other than earthly treasure feels that he is bankrupt. The man whose only god was money, if he loses that loses all. But he whose trust is in the Lord knows that he has treasure invested safely where moth and rust cannot corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal. Many a man has learnt to thank God for his losses; his money, or his business, or his speculations were so growing upon him that they bid fair to ruin his life. They were like the accursed thing hidden in Achan's tent, which brought sorrow and sin with it. Many a one has learnt in the hour of poverty and loss to exchange the base metal of earth for the fine gold of Heaven.

Or it may be that the evil tidings tell us that our health is hopelessly gone. We consult some famous doctor, not thinking there is much the matter with us, and we hear the unexpected sentence, we have only a few weeks or months to live. Ah, it is only the man who has the peace of God in his heart who can receive that sentence in a right spirit. He whose trust is in the Lord knows very well that man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live. He knows that this earthly body of ours is only meant for a few years' work and suffering; and he ever sets before him the motto—I must work while it is called to-day. You have heard, perhaps, of the doctor who asked a brother physician to examine him, and then to tell him plainly his condition. And the second doctor told the first that he had only a few months to live, a year at most.

Then the man who had received his death sentence set about his work and duties with renewed vigour, that he might do as much good as possible in the short time allowed him. Believe me, we shall be most able to meet trouble and danger if they find us doing our work and worshipping our God.

During Napoleon's wars on the Continent, one of the most dreaded of his generals approached a little Austrian town at the head of eighteen thousand French soldiers. It was Easter Day, and the rays of the rising sun flashed upon the French bayonets where the troops were drawn upon the heights above the town. The town council met in fear to consult as to what should be done. To defend the town was impossible, and they were about to send a request for mercy to the French general, when the old white-haired dean of the Cathedral rose up, and addressed the meeting. "It is Easter Day," he said. "We have been trusting to our own strength, and that fails. Let us turn to God. It is the day of the Lord's resurrection. Let us ring the bells for service as usual, and leave the matter in God's Hands." Then from the different Churches in the town the joy-bells pealed forth, and when the French heard them they thought that an Austrian army had come to relieve the town, and they retired till there was not an enemy left.

Brethren, worship God faithfully and do your duty manfully, and you shall not be afraid for any evil tidings. "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Sermon VIII.

THE PEACE OF GOD.

PHILIPPIANS IV. 7.

“The peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”



WEALTH, power, success are for the few, peace is for all who put their trust in the Lord. The world is full of anxiety, sorrow, unrest, because the majority of people have not learnt to rest in the Lord and to wait patiently for Him. Men are trying to steer their life's barque by their own wisdom and skill, to carve out their future with their own hands, to build their house of life without the Lord's help, and so they are always meeting with failures, disappointments, reverses. The man who tries to live his life without God, is like a child raising a too ambitious house of cards, it is sure to fall to pieces sooner or later. There are people in very high places who wear purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day, but they do not know what peace means. Worry, anxiety, doubt, are the familiar spirits which haunt them and spoil their life. And there are people who

seem to possess nothing; they are poor, hard worked, badly fed, and yet they possess all things, they hold a jewel which is better than all the diamonds in the world, they have in their hearts and minds the peace of God which passeth all understanding. A man may have vast possessions and yet lack peace of mind, like Alexander the Great, who, with the conquered world at his feet, was unhappy because he could not make ivy grow in his gardens at Babylon. Or a man may be poor indeed and yet at rest, like the beggar who, seeing a mouse eat the crumbs at his table, learnt with contentment that there were others still poorer than himself.

S. Paul tells us where the true peace is to be found: "The peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through *Christ Jesus*." It is the man who rests upon the Lord, like the blessed S. John, who knows what this peace is. "Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee." If we can say with truth, "My heart is fixed, O Lord, my heart is fixed," all the storms of this world cannot overwhelm us; if we have firm trust in the Lord Jesus, nothing else matters.

In thinking of this peace of God, we must remember that it does not mean *absence of trouble*. No people understand what sorrow means more than God's people, no one has to bear heavier burdens and climb up steeper paths than the followers of Jesus. No one fights a harder battle or struggles more with the waves

of temptation than the true soldier of Christ. And yet he is at peace. When Noah was in the Ark he was not placed in a sheltered harbour, but out in the stormy wind and tempest, yet Noah could rejoice and sing because he knew that the Lord was with him. When a vessel lies securely anchored, she does not remain fixed and unmoveable, but rolls and pitches with the force of the tide, and the rush of the billows, yet safe. So the Christian whose sure trust is fixed on the Lord has to bear the waves of this troublesome world, and the tempest of trial and sorrow, but he is safe, for the anchor holds. Nowhere does God tell His people that they shall be free from dangers and troubles. On the contrary, He tells them that they shall often pass through great tribulation, but He promises them that the peace of God shall keep their hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. On board an iron steam vessel the compass by which the course is steered is placed high up above the vessel, that the iron may not affect the magnet. Then however much the vessel may roll and tumble in the waves, the compass points true. So is it with God's people. They are sent out into the stormy sea of life, but their hearts and minds are lifted up on high above the things of the world, and they are at peace.

S. Paul is constantly speaking about peace in his Epistles, yet most of his days were spent in prison, and in perils by land and sea, perils by robbers, perils by shipwreck. The iron of the Roman prison was on his

limbs, but it could not enter into his soul, the peace of God was there. He might lose his friends, his freedom, but he could not lose Jesus, and he wanted no more. We see godly people among ourselves sorely tried and afflicted. "The righteous dieth and no man taketh it to heart." That prayerful, patient mother sees her darlings taken from her one after another, she trusted in God, yet the little ones who were her joy, are lying in the churchyard. That upright, religious man who refuses to conduct his business on dishonest terms is poor, whilst his unscrupulous neighbour flourishes like a green bay tree, and some of us wonder at all this, and ask, what is the use of serving God? Ah, we forget that those suffering, sorrowing, much-tried people are richer, and better off than the others; they have something which the world cannot give, because it has not got it to give, they have the peace of God which passeth all understanding. This peace of God gives that most perfect of treasures—a *good conscience*. It is the best friend to have. Worldly friends are uncertain. They come and go, and often stand afar off when they should be near. They love not the time of trouble, they are loth to come to the sick man's bedside, and listen to his groans. At the best they can but follow him to his grave, and there leave him. But a good conscience will make one's bed in sickness, and cause him to lie the softer; will stand by him when he groans, and give him comfort; will strengthen him when death is coming, and say,

"Thy Redeemer liveth"; will whisper to him when departing, "Thy warfare is accomplished"; will lay his body in the grave as in a bed, and bear his soul to Paradise.

Again, the peace of God gives *contentment*, the sweetest flower that grows in the Christian's garden. Nothing can really come amiss to the contented man. He is willing to take what God gives him, and to give up what God takes away; he knows how to be full and how to be empty. You may be quite sure that if a man is always grumbling about his lot in life and his surroundings, he has not the peace of God in his heart. With some people nothing is ever right. The weather is too hot or too cold. Their work is too hard or too uninteresting. The sweetest music has a discord in it, the fairest picture is out of drawing. So with them the times are "always out of joint." Everyone is wrong but themselves. If they look at a rose tree they only notice the thorns and never see the flowers. These people are always fretful and unhappy. It matters not how much a man possesses, if he has not contentment, he is miserable; but on the other hand, he who has the peace of God in his heart, who is contented with such things as the Lord sends him, can be happy anywhere and under any circumstances.

Again, if we have the peace of God in our hearts it will *lead us to be active in His service*. Peace is a very different thing from idleness. A man who does nothing may be very quiet, but not at peace. The man who

goes to sleep is not necessarily at peace. There are people who sit down beside the highway of life and fold their hands, and tell us that they have found peace, but they are only idle. If the peace of God keeps our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus, we shall try to do some work for Him, and endeavour to follow the example of His most holy life. Some people think that they can find peace by shutting themselves out of the world. But they cannot shut out bad thoughts and wicked desires from their hearts. I believe we find the true peace when we are most busy in the active work of our Master's service. Those who never do any good in the world, and try to keep their religion entirely to themselves, are like the miser who buries his coins in the earth. He has a treasure, but it is useless to him because it does not circulate from hand to hand. My brethren, Christianity is worthless unless we spend it by doing good to our fellow-men. That is working for Christ. Whenever we try to help a fellow-man we are ministering unto the Lord Jesus. He who picks up a child out of the road, and soothes its crying, is serving Christ, inasmuch as he has done something for the least of these little ones. A poor woman was seen in one of our great Northern towns in a street where many children were running to and fro barefooted. The woman was very busy picking up something from the ground and putting it in her apron. Some one, moved by curiosity, asked her what she was doing, and found that she was picking up the pieces of

broken glass which lay in the road. She pointed to the cruel jagged fragments in her apron, and said, "I thought I would take them out of the way of the children's feet."

Ah, my brethren, the paths of this world are often very rough and hard for all our feet, whether we be children or grown men, and blessed are those who do what they can to remove the stumbling blocks, and the things that wound, out of our way. If we have the love of Jesus, the peace of God, in our hearts, we shall try to make life easier and happier for our fellow-men. Too many people seem to be always throwing the sharp fragments that cut and wound in our way instead of removing them. Life is a very up-hill journey to most people, and some of us have a very heavy burden to bear up the hill; that load would be so far more easily borne if our neighbours would all stretch out a helping hand. When we do this we do angels' work, we are fulfilling our Lord's command, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

People often say that they wish they had lived on earth when Jesus was dwelling here among men, that they might have ministered to Him, and given a home to the Master Who had not where to lay His Head. This is often mere idle talk. The world was very selfish and indifferent when Jesus Christ was here amongst us, it is very selfish and indifferent now. If the Lord were to come again suddenly on earth preaching the same old Gospel, uttering the teachings of the

Sermon on the Mount, how many people would welcome Him? Would fashionable society, with its shams and its selfishness, and its impurity, open its doors to Him Who spoke of the blessedness of the pure in heart? Would the Son of God be well received in our great business centres if He came proclaiming the morality of the New Testament? How many shops and counting-houses would care to have Jesus Christ inspecting their trade books and their way of business? And, again, how many of us would be ready to give up anything for the sake of following that Lord if He came and called us to-day? This sentimental talk about wishing to minister to Jesus is often most unreal and untrue.

If we really desire to work for Him and minister to Him there is no difficulty in the matter. If we would act instead of talk, the opportunities are numerous enough. If, like the poor woman, we try to take any danger out of the way of another's feet, we minister unto Jesus. If we try to help another in any way, if it be only with a cheery word and a kindly smile, we minister unto Jesus. Christ walks our streets to-day in the form of His poor, His sad, His suffering; if you do any kindness to them, you do it unto Him—

"O dreamer, dreaming that your faith is keeping
All service free from blot,
Christ daily walks your streets, sick, suffering, weeping,
And you perceive Him not."

To those who have the love of Jesus in their heart,

whose heart and mind are ruled by the peace of God, it comes as naturally to do a kind action as it does to a rose to smell sweet. I do not believe in a religion which does not come out of people, which is cold and hard like a frozen stream. If the love of Jesus be in us it will flow out in acts and words of kindness to other people.

Perhaps you say that you lead a busy life, that you have to work hard for your living, that you have no time and opportunity for the service of Christ. My brethren, it is just in that busy hard life of yours that you have most chances of showing what your religion is like, and whether the peace of God rules your life and actions. Some people in their talk and manner are like the flies which always settle on our sore place and make it smart. Be kind to others, try to make their lives happier, their burdens lighter.

Travellers tell us that in foreign lands where volcanoes exist, the country around for miles is barren and burnt up by the volcanic fire. No blade of grass, no bush nor tree can grow in that black desert, but here and there in the cracks and fissures of the land tiny flowers blossom, and brighten the gloomy scene. Some of us have had their lives burnt up by the fire of sorrow, or bereavement, or loss. There seems to be no oasis, no pleasant green spot in all their life's journey; it is in our power to show them kindness, to speak words of sympathy and cheer, to make life a little brighter for them; these little acts of loving ministry will be to

their dark lives what the flowers are to the fire-scorched fields round the volcano. You would know peace, the peace of God which passeth all understanding? Then seek it in doing good, in helping others, in trying humbly to follow that dear Lord Who went about doing good.

Sermon IX.

THE SCHOOL OF PATIENCE.

ROMANS XII. 12.

"Patient in tribulation."



HERE are many schools in the world where we may learn many valuable lessons, but there is only one where we can be taught to bear our troubles patiently, and that is the school of Christ. In a great public school a boy has to face many difficulties, to endure hardness, to suffer sharp punishment, but in the end it makes a man of him. So in the school of Christ we have some very hard lessons, very difficult tasks, the use of which we do not always understand; the discipline sometimes is very severe, our hearts are often sore, our eyes often red with tears, but if we use these lessons in a right way they will make men of us, Christian men here on earth, and fit us for the great hereafter when our schooling is over, and we go home to our Father's House.

When S. Paul told the Christians at Rome to be patient in tribulation, he was writing to those who were scholars in Christ's school. They lived in one of

the wickedest cities in the world, and under the eye of an emperor who was a monster of cruelty. If he discovered them to be Christians every horrible torture which could be devised was inflicted upon them. Every time they met for worship they were in peril of their lives. Yet they persevered. Why? Because they were in Christ's school, and had learnt among other things that whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for Christ's sake and the Gospel's shall have life everlasting. Those Christian martyrs could not once have borne their sorrows and trials as they had learnt to do. Once they returned evil for evil, they murmured if they were afflicted, now they had mastered the lesson to be rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation.

Believe me, there is no school like Christ's school, no teacher like the Cross. In some hospitals they have a chamber called the dark room, where patients are prepared for an operation. When they come to themselves they find that they have left something behind them, a leg, an arm, a hand, or some internal growth, and that they are going to begin life afresh as new and healthy people. It is so with Christ's people. We have to pass through the dark chamber of sorrow and trial, we have to endure the keen knife of bereavement; when we come to ourselves we find that we have left something behind us, something, perhaps, which was as precious as our right hand or our right eye, but we know it means health to our soul, we are

new creatures, we were dying, and behold we live. So we learn the golden lesson, oft mastered in tears, to be patient in tribulation.

It is often asked why God, Who is love, permits so much sorrow and suffering in the world, especially in the case of those who are leading most pure and holy lives. Surely such questions and doubts are very unreasonable. We do not question the love of a parent who chastises his child, or a schoolmaster who rules his pupils strictly, or a commander who maintains stern discipline among his soldiers. Why should God's school be the only one where no tears are shed? Some people are too fond of finding fault with God's method of ruling the world. They seem to think that if they were in the place of the Almighty they could manage matters far better. They tell us that such and such a statement in the Bible concerning God's acts is not just, nor right; they say that they know better, and that God will not be extreme to mark what is done amiss, or to punish sin, and that it is not like a loving Father to make His children suffer.

My brethren, what right have we to question the acts of Almighty God? Are we wiser than God, is the child more fit to advise than the father, shall the clay argue with the potter, or the stubble resist the power of the fire? No, let us feel what God does we know not now, but we shall know hereafter. We are children at school, let us learn our lessons, even if we have to weep over them. If you were to travel in Switzerland

among the mountains, and wished to climb to the top of the lofty Alps, they would show you a steep path, very narrow, and sometimes very dangerous, and they would tell you that that is the way. And if you were to hesitate, and say that the path was too hard for you, and that you must climb up some other way, the answer would be—That is the only way, you cannot reach the mountain top except by that hard path. So it is God's Will that if we would reach the high ground of the Better Land, we must travel in the path of sorrow which leads through Gethsemane and Calvary, it is His good pleasure that we shall through great tribulation pass to our rest.

If the gardener lets the trees in the garden, or the plants in the greenhouse, grow wild and luxuriant at their own sweet will, he knows that there will be little or no fruit or blossom next year. So he cuts them back. It seems hard, perhaps, that those wide-spreading limbs and branches should be pruned and cut so close, but look next season, and you will find the roses thicker and stronger, the fruit more abundant. God cuts His people back with a sharp sorrow, a bitter bereavement, that they may bring forth more fruit unto holiness, more sweet white blossoms of purity.

When men go mining for gold, they often find the precious metal bedded in the quartz. And there it is useless. So they crush the quartz, and out of the crushing comes the fine gold. My brethren, the best gold in our nature comes out in the crushing. We

have to go through the mill before the best of us shows itself. The precious stone which sparkles among the crown jewels had to be sharply cut and hardly ground before it became what it was. Jewels in the rough are little worth, they need sharp hard methods before they become really valuable, so do Christians. God desires that all His people should be saved, should be as fine gold and precious jewels, so He brings out our good qualities through the hard mill of sorrow and suffering.

Then God sends us sorrows to make us more fit to help others in the hard battle of life. We must have trodden the rough road of suffering ourselves before we are fit to guide others along it. It is said that the makers of the best violins abroad produce their wonderful music by breaking and skilfully mending new instruments, which when first made had little power or melody. When God breaks us with a hard trouble, He knows how to mend us again, and we give forth the music of gentleness, love, and unselfishness, which we were incapable of before. Have you ever watched men mending a road in our great towns? The heavy steam roller crushes down all the sharpness and roughness of the stones, and makes an easy way for people to travel on. So God sends us trials and afflictions which crush the hard, sharp points of our character, and make us fit to help others on the journey from earth to Heaven.

The prosperous man, with strong healthy body, and loud unsympathetic voice, cannot understand the feel-

ings of the nervous sufferer, or the mourner by the death-bed. He does not know, he does not understand. If we are in great pain or sorrow, we want someone who has felt pain and encountered sorrow to minister to us. Of such people we say—They will know what I feel. The mother with her children all around her, healthy and happy, cannot enter fully into the sorrows of that other mother who mourns by the empty bed where her darling died. The best iron has been through the fire and under the hammer, so the best and truest of God's people have graduated in the school of sorrow.

Trial has ever occupied a foremost place in the making of God's saints. Look at Elijah. The best part of his character did not show itself till he had been through the mighty rushing wind, and the earthquake, and the fire. Then he could hear the still voice speaking to him. Brethren, we sometimes hear God speaking to us for the first time when we have been through some great affliction. When the sun was shining, and all things smiled upon us, we neglected God, and could not hear Him speaking to us. Then the great wind of affliction arose, and broke down our house of delights, and wrecked our pleasure boat, and after the storm we heard the still small voice. Or the earthquake came and swallowed up our property, and the idols which we had made for ourselves to worship, and after the earthquake we heard the voice of the Lord. Or the fire came, some fierce, burning tempta-

tion, and we passed through that fire by God's mercy, as the three holy children passed through the furnace; we were tried in the fire, but not consumed, and after the fire we heard the voice of God.

They are the best soldiers who have been through the fire and smoke of the battle, and they are the best Christians who have faced the tempest, and the fire, and the earthquake, who have known sorrow. Look at the Prophet Jonah. The best part of him was not shown till he had been tried severely. When God prepared a grateful shade for him by means of the spreading gourd, Jonah was sulky, discontented, and disobedient, yet God gave him the gourd, of which he was exceeding glad. That teaches us that the same God sends us prosperity as well as sorrow; and that even the discontented and the ungrateful have their good things sometimes. But God was going to make a better man of Jonah, and so He took away the gourd in which he delighted. The Lord prepared a worm which smote the gourd that it withered.

God deals so with His people now. He has given you something for which you are exceeding glad, health, money, wife, child. Perhaps you think more of them than of God. You have said in your heart, "Tush, I shall never be moved." You have sat in the comfortable shade of your prosperity, and thought that to-morrow would be as yesterday, and God was not in all your thoughts. Then God in His mercy sent the worm, some little thing which could do great things.

You were strong and healthy, and rejoiced exceedingly, and were glad of your active limbs and athletic frame, and some accidental fall, some slip or stumble, came like the little worm, and your health and strength in which you trusted withered away. You made an idol of wife or child, you loved them better than God, you let your home joys come between you and duty, between you and Jesus. Then one morning your darling is feverish and restless, and almost before you know it the worm has done its work, and your plant of delight is withered and dead.

Sometimes sorrow comes upon sorrow, as the East wind came upon Jonah after he had lost his gourd. He was a better man after he had been through that cloud of troubles than when he sat at ease beneath his favourite plant. He learnt to see God's Hand more clearly in the gloomy day of his loss than in the sunshine of prosperity, just as we behold the stars most clearly when the world is dark. Jonah learnt to see God in his prosperity and in his adversity. Let us do likewise. Sorrows without God are terrible. Never suppose that trial and affliction benefit people of themselves. They make some people worse, just as a hardened offender is made still harder by beating. Sorrows only benefit us when we can see God's Hand giving the bitter medicine. Bereavement and loss make some people curse God and die, and render them unbelievers in the goodness of the Lord. The clay is made hard as a stone in the fire, the silver is melted and purified. Those who do not love God

are like the clay ; when they have to go through the hot furnace of affliction, they come out harder than they went in. Those to whom the Holy Spirit has given the precious fruit of patience, see God in the fire, and are purified and made better people. Yes, sorrow and loss without God are awful things. We fight and kick against them, and only wound and hurt ourselves the more. The child called upon to suffer some sharp pain says—I can bear anything if mother is in the room. So the child of God can endure all things if he but knows that God is with him, and that underneath are the Everlasting Arms.

Lastly, how can we best learn the lesson of being patient in tribulation? Do not meet trouble half way, and tire yourselves out before you are called upon to bear it. Some people are always looking out for the storm clouds, even on the finest day, and spoiling their happiest hours by anticipating trouble. Take the sunshine and the shower as they come, and believe that the same loving God sends both. Then keep very close to God. Do not live far off from Jesus when you are prosperous, and try to run to Him for shelter when the storm comes. Keep close to Him always, then you will be safe. The parent says to a timid child—Keep hold of mother's hand. All through the journey of life keep hold of the Hand of the Lord Jesus. In times of prosperity hold fast to the Hand which fed the five thousand in the wilderness. In times of sorrow and trial hold fast to the Hand which was nailed to the bitter Cross

of Calvary. I said that only those who have known sorrow can rightly sympathize with the sorrowful. Who can understand our troubles as well as Jesus? Is there one throb of our quivering nerves, one sob of our panting bosom, one ache of our wounded, desolate heart which does not find an echo in the Man of Sorrows? Take your griefs and troubles to Him in prayer. Tell Him all fully and freely. Open your heart to Jesus. So many of our prayers are wasted because they have no definite aim nor purpose. When there was war in South Africa it was found that the Boers did more execution with their guns than our troops. The reason was that our soldiers fired into a mass of the enemy, leaving it to chance whether they hit or missed. The Boers singled out an enemy, and took deliberate aim. So with your prayers. Have a fixed object, a definite aim before you, and your request will go straight to the mark.

Sermon X.

THE TROUBLES OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

PSALM XXXIV. 19.

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.”



ALL people, whether good or bad, know sorrows and meet with afflictions, for all are out on the waves of this troublesome world. But God's servant, though tossed to and fro by the stormy billows of trouble, has a life-buoy to hold fast to, even faith in God, and so he keeps his head above water. The godless man has nothing but his own strength to trust in, and so the waves of sorrow soon go over his soul. The text tells us two things—one bitter, the other sweet. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous.” That is a bitter truth. We know it only too well. Those of us who have tried to keep close to God, who have loved the way of His Commandments, who have made His holy Church our home, how many troubles we have known, what bitter tears we have shed, what fond hopes we have seen disappointed, what pleasant dreams we have had dispelled, what sick-beds we have knelt by, what graves we have mourned over.

Some of us who have tried to prove themselves Christ's soldiers and servants, and to bear themselves like those who have the cross upon their brow, are grievously wounded in the battle, very footsore and weary in the journey of life. But what then? Those scars, those troubles, are honourable marks; they show that we have been fighting the battle, not hiding away like cowards; they show that we have been climbing the steep, rough road that leads to life eternal, not lying asleep on the soft bed of the sluggard. Are your limbs weary, my brother? It proves that you have been breasting the stream, not floating down to the rapids and to death. This life is our training time, where we learn to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. That splendid horse, with its iron muscles and supple limbs, that can win the race against the swiftest, and bear fatigue with the strongest, how did it become what it is? By being well broken in when a colt, by careful training. So with ourselves. We need to be broken in to God's service, we need to go through a hard, rough time before we become good soldiers of Christ, we want the spur and the whip, the bit and the curb, the weight and the burden.

"Many are the afflictions of the righteous." That is true of *The Righteous One*, our Lord Jesus Christ. From the rude manger at Bethlehem to the bitter Cross on Calvary how many were the troubles of the Righteous One. How much sorrow, disappointment, and pain was crowded into those brief three and thirty years.

Hungry and thirsty, homeless, with nowhere to lay His Head, tempted by the devil, despised and rejected of men, misunderstood and misjudged, craving for the love of all men and finding only hate, weeping for a world which laughed and mocked at Him, a King Whose only crown was of thorns, and Whose only throne was a Cross, pierced, wounded, slain for the sake of a thankless people; many indeed and great were the afflictions of the Righteous One. As says one, "Each Limb of Thy holy flesh endured ignominy for our sakes. Thy Head the thorns, Thy Face the spittings, Thy Cheek the buffets, Thy Mouth the gall mingled with vinegar, Thine Ears the blasphemies of the wicked, Thy Back the scourges, Thy Hand the reed, Thy whole Body was stretched upon the Cross, Thy Hands and Feet endured the nails, and Thy Side the spear." Surely the Lord is long-suffering, plenteous in goodness and truth. As He suffered for the sins of all men, so He suffered in every part, both of mind and body. Here is the bitter fact, many are the afflictions of the Righteous One. But here comes the sweet assurance—"The Lord delivereth Him out of them all." Jesus suffered and was buried, but the third day He rose again. He passed through the dark valley of the shadow of death, and cried, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" But now He has gone up on high, the everlasting gates have been lifted up, and He sitteth at the right hand of God the Father, waiting till His enemies are made His footstool.

What is true of Jesus is true of us. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." Abraham is called to sacrifice his son, Jacob mourns his beloved wife, Moses dies an exile from the Land of Promise, Job loses all that he has, David is persecuted and hunted by enemies, and breaks his heart for a fair, false son; Joseph finds a prison and a false charge in return for his chastity; there is a fiery furnace for Shadrach and his brethren, and there is a fiery furnace for every true child of God. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." That is true of all God's people now.

With some it is the affliction of *fierce and terrible temptation*. It is the good man who knows best what temptation means. The bad man does not trouble himself about the temptation, be it strong drink, or unclean lust, or whatever it is. When it comes, he just holds out his hand, and lets the tempter lead him where he will. It is the godly man who meets the temptation fighting. When S. Charles Borromeo was kneeling at the altar, men saw a thin streak of blood falling beneath his priestly vestments. It came from the wounds which the Saint had inflicted with the scourge when sorely tried by temptation. Ah, brethren, there is many a godly man among us who bears the scars of a terrible battle with sin; the priest's vestment, and the prince's robe, and the poor man's fustian alike cover the bleeding heart, the wounded spirit. And the Lord Jesus knows all about these secret battles of ours, these wounds which the tempter has given us. He

knows all about the traveller on life's way who has fallen among thieves, who have stripped him, and wounded him, and left him half dead. He helps those who are tempted, and are fighting with the temptation.

"He hears one's life-blood dripping
Through the maddest, merriest hour;
He knows what sack-cloth and ashes hide in the purple of power."

"Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." He does not take the temptation entirely away, He does not shelter us from the battle of life, but He gives us strength to bear, and to fight, and to conquer; with the temptation He provides a means of escape. He is not always the best soldier who never knew defeat; nor is he the best Christian who never stumbled beneath the attack of the enemy. Many a future victory has been planned upon the field of defeat, many a hand has learnt to grasp the sword harder from the pain of a smarting wound. Never despair, dear brethren, because you may fall into many and great temptations, "many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." If you have fallen to-day through weakness, rise up again, and fight more bravely, watch more closely, pray more earnestly to-morrow.

"Build thy great acts higher and higher,
Build them on the conquered sod
Where thy weakness first fell bleeding,
Where thy first prayer was to God."

These sorrows which come to God's people in the form of temptations are to try our patience, our endurance. It is he who endures to the end who shall receive the crown of life; not he who fights one brilliant battle with sin, and then retires, but he who stands his ground against the enemy day after day, year after year, fighting with the temptation. This is the hardest of all fighting. Most of us make up our minds to do some great thing in God's service once in a way. At our Confirmation, or our first Communion, we make good resolutions, we will take unto us the whole armour of God, we say to ourselves—"Onward, Christian soldiers," and we mean it. But in a little while the world, the flesh, and the devil attack us, and we grow weary of well-doing, tired of fighting. When General Stonewall Jackson, the godly hero of the American War, was in his last battle, another officer told him that he could not keep his men together and hold his ground in face of the enemy. And the General answered, "You *must* keep your men together and hold your ground." It was his last order, for in a few moments he fell wounded unto death. My brethren, the Lord Jesus Christ gives a like command to us, His Church. He tells us that in the face of our spiritual enemy we *must* keep our men together, united by one faith, one Baptism, one hope of our calling. That we *must* hold our ground, however hard the fighting, and however weary the soldiers of Christ may be.

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous.” Often they come in the form of *bereavement*. We miss the patter of little feet upon the stairs, the prattle of little lips beside us. There is the vacant chair opposite to us by the fireside, so silent, yet so eloquent of other and brighter days. There are new graves in the Churchyard, and they remind us, what we scarcely thought of before, that the time for all is very short. We have a closer connection with Paradise now that our dear ones are there, and the chain which connects us with the unseen world passes through a grave. These sorrows soften and calm God’s people, they teach them to say—I would not have it otherwise, it is better so. There is a legend which tells us how a young girl lay dying. Her brother, who loved her devotedly, was told that her illness would be healed if he could obtain a single leaf from the tree of life, which grows in the garden of God. He set forth to find the garden, and asked the angel at the gate to give him one leaf from the tree of life. Then the angel asked the boy if he could promise that his sister should never be ill again, and never be unhappy, or do wrong, or be treated harshly. The boy could not promise. Then the angel opened the gate of the garden a little way, and showed the boy a glimpse of its beauty, its peace, and its blessedness, and asked him if he still wished for a leaf from the tree of life? And the boy answered, “No, there is no place on earth as beautiful as that, and no friend as kind as the angel of death.” Yes, the righteous are drawn nearer to God

and home by the memory of those who have gone home already. They have taken their stony griefs and built up an altar unto the Lord with them, and learnt to say through their tears—Thy will be done. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous,” but he learns to recognize them as God’s messengers, and to say—

“Never messenger shall come if he be not sent,
We will welcome one and all, since the Lord so meant;
Welcome Pain, and Grief, and Death, saying with glad acclaim,
‘Blessed be all who come to us in the Lord’s dear Name.’ ”

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous.” Sometimes they come in the form of *illness*. We are told that we shall never more be able to move with springing step across the grass, never more be able to go forth and look on God’s beautiful world, there is the failing heart, the vanishing sight, the crippled limb to be our companion till the end. A great and sore sorrow truly, and yet to the righteous illness and pain come like God’s angels, laying their gentle hands upon the restless one and saying—Peace, be still. A good man’s sick room becomes a sanctuary, a holy place, where such prayers are offered, such *Te Deums* sung, as the outside world has never known. The sick bed is God’s altar, and the prayers and praises of the patient sufferer rise like the incense all day long. Many a one who was hard and impatient and selfish has become in the chamber of sickness long-suffering, gentle, meek. A man learns to know God better in the hushed room where he lies

helpless than anywhere else. He gets to feel his own weakness, he cannot lift the once strong arm, or move the once ready hands, then he learns to lean upon the Arm of the Almighty, and to say—Lord, undertake for me.

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous.” Sometimes they take the form of *poverty*. It is a sharp trouble, doubtless, to have to feed other mouths as well as our own, and to find little or no chance of earning one’s bread. Yet it is often these very people who are so tried who learn to live close to God. When a man does not know where the next crust is to come from, he is able to pray—Give us this day our daily bread, with far more faith and force than he who never wanted a meal. Poverty may drive the godless into all sorts of sin, but it makes a true man of the righteous, it teaches him to trust God and work hard. I have read of a man whose house and mill, even his whole living, were swept away by a flood, and when he stood beside the ruins, broken-hearted, he saw something shining on the river’s bank. It was gold; the flood which had beggared him had laid bare the gold and given him a fortune. So God, when He makes us poor in this world’s things, often gives us the fine gold of faith in Him, and we become as those having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous.” They come sometimes in the form of *home trials*. There are plenty of tragedies and plenty of martyrdoms enacted on the narrow stage of home. If we could only look into all

the secrets of the houses around us we should find such bitter sorrows, such aching hearts, such patient tear-stained faces. It has been said that every household has its skeleton closet, its secret trouble. There are patient, gentle wives undergoing the long martyrdom of living with a drunken, violent husband. There are husbands whose whole life is embittered by a wife's evil temper and irritating tongue. There are parents who go down to the grave saddened and disappointed by selfish and disobedient children. There are people who have to bear with unjust judgment, to be evil spoken of, falsely accused, ridiculed. Over and over again it is true that a man's foes are those of his own household. But these gentle martyrs, witnesses for Christ, learn to know Him and love Him so well. Their sorrows draw them very close to the Man of Sorrows. They have to go to Gethsemane and Calvary most days, and so they learn to watch and pray with Him Who prayed in the garden, Who suffered on the Cross. So the Lord delivereth them out of all their affliction, He brings sweetness out of the bitter cup which is daily put to their lips. And hereafter I believe that among them who went through great tribulation, and washed their robes in the Blood of the Lamb, none will wear brighter crowns, or bear fairer palms than the fireside saints, the home martyrs, who when they were reviled, reviled not again; who suffered, and loved, and endured.

Sermon XI.

NIGHT AND MORNING.

PSALM xxx. 5.

“ Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”



THE Psalms have brought comfort to sad hearts, and taught God's people the golden lesson of long-suffering patience perhaps more than any other book in the Bible. David had received that blessed fruit of the Spirit, long-suffering, and what he learnt in sorrow, he taught in song. I think David is so popular with people because he knew trouble so well, and so he is one of ourselves. We do not think of him so much as the great King, sitting on his throne at Hebron or Jerusalem, but as the ruddy-faced shepherd boy whom his tall soldier brothers despised and envied. We think of him as a fugitive from the presence of gloomy, scowling Saul, hiding among the mountains, sheltering with outlaws in the cave of Adullam, feeling that there was but a step between him and death. Above all we think of him in his great sin and his bitter sorrow. No one knew better than David what the night of weeping meant. When he lay all night upon the ground, and prayed with fasting

lips for the child of his sin and shame ; when he looked with wet eyes upon his whispering servants, and asked them—"Is the child dead?" he knew what the night of weeping meant. When the days came that the beautiful bad Absalom rebelled against him, and the son who had grown up as his darling proved a traitor ; when David cried, "Would to God that I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son," he knew what the night of weeping meant. What he knew by bitter experience he puts into his Psalms, and so it is that they go straight to our hearts. We feel that he has been through it all, that he understands what pain, and loss, and sorrow, and remorse mean, and so David is our friend in the dark night of weeping.

Have *we* never poured forth those sad words of confession, "I acknowledge my faults, and my sin is ever before me. Cast me not away from Thy Presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me?" Have *we* never felt as though God had forsaken us, and would be no more intreated, and that our strength had failed us for waiting so long upon our God? Have *we* never had occasion to cry—"Take heed unto me and hear me, how I mourn in my prayer and am vexed. The enemy crieth so, and the ungodly cometh on so fast ; for they are minded to do me some mischief, so maliciously are they set against me?" Who is there who has not at some time echoed the words of David, and sighed for the wings of a dove, that he might flee away and be at rest?

So it is that in our sad times we turn to the Psalms as being the words of a fellow-sufferer who knows our sorrows. But we know also that a greater than David is here. If he knew what pain and trouble means, Jesus Christ knows still better. The words of David may teach us and comfort us in the dark hours, but it is the Lord Jesus only Who can bring us out of darkness into light, Who can give us joy in the morning after the night of weeping is ended. For our Lord Jesus Christ the thirty years of His earthly life made up one long night of weeping. He was from the first a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief. From the tears shed as a little Babe neglected by the world, to the tears of a broken Heart shed upon the Cross, Jesus was under the shadow of the night of sorrow and weeping. Well might He say—My tears have been My meat day and night. Well might He complain—O My people, what have I done unto you? Did I not fill Judæa with My wonders? Did I not raise the dead by a word alone? Did I not heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease? What is it that ye render Me in return? Laying stripes upon Me in return for My healing, slaying Me for My life-giving; hanging Me, the Benefactor, on the Cross as a malefactor, the Lawgiver as the lawless, the King of all as the culprit.

There can be no weeping of ours worse than that of Jesus over doomed Jerusalem, over a sinful world. The Psalmist says somewhere, "Put my tears in Thy

bottle." It was a custom among the ancients to collect the tears which had been shed for some departed friend, and place them in a glass vase or bottle, and fix it on the tomb as a memorial of their grief. So Jesus, as it were, "counts and treasures up our tears," tears of penitence, tears of agony, tears of sorrow; He knows them and understands them, because He knows how true it is that weeping may endure for a night. But for Jesus it was true that joy cometh in the morning. There was the night of sorrow, of desertion, of temptation, of agony, of death. But the third day He rose again from the dead. Joy came on the resurrection morning. Then the Lord could say—Thou hast turned My heaviness into joy; Thou hast put off My sackcloth, and girded Me with gladness. Then was given to them that mourned in Sion beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Brethren, if we be Christ's people we must journey on the same road as our Master. What have we to do with the primrose path or the easy way, when our Lord trod the wilderness, and knelt in Gethsemane, and died on Calvary? As we are joint heirs with Christ, we must expect to share His heritage of sorrow. For all Christ's true servants the words are true, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Yes, this life of ours in the world is as night time, when we cannot see clearly, and when there is much sorrow and crying.

The apprentice who has to labour hard, and endure

self-denial and sharp discipline for many a year, cheers himself with the thought that at least he is learning his profession, and that the day will come when he will be out of his time, and able to begin a new life. We are all apprentices in the great hard workshop of this world, where we learn, often in tears and pain, our profession, which is to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and be made like unto Him. And we can look forward to the time when we shall have learnt our lesson, and be out of our time, and begin a new life, even the life everlasting. Let us learn, then, to look on the night of weeping, the sorrows and trials of this life, as our apprenticeship for the great work of eternity, and let us remember when the night seems very dark, and the weeping very bitter, that we are not alone in our sorrows. There is nothing more terrible than to be quite alone in a time of great anxiety and trouble ; to feel that there is no one to whom we can go for comfort, or help, or advice.

Well, God's people are never alone, in the most solitary place, in the blackest night of sorrow they know that Jesus is with them, that underneath are the Everlasting Arms. In a certain picture gallery abroad there hang two painting side by side. The one represents a wild and stormy sea beneath a black and angry sky, and in the midst of the waves there is the despairing face of one in agony. The other also represents a stormy sea beneath an angry sky, but there stands a rock against which the billows beat in vain,

flowers are springing in the clefts of the rock, and, in spite of the tempest, a dove sits brooding on her nest. The one picture shows us sorrow without God, the other the peace of those who sorrow after a godly sort, and whose trust is in the Lord their God. We must all know our night of weeping, and blessed are those of us who can hide their tearful faces on the breast of Jesus, and wait for the joy that cometh in the morning.

For some there is *the night of doubt*. We do not seem able to see our way clear before us. Our prayers appear to be in vain. There is no voice, nor any that answers. We cry out in our agony—Keep not still silence, O God. O Lord, how long wilt Thou hide Thyself, for ever? Yes, there are times when the very best of men seem to be altogether in the dark, there comes no ray of light to cheer them, there is nothing but to eat ashes as it were bread, and mingle their drink with weeping. It seems as though God had forgotten to be gracious, and that His mercy is clean gone for ever. But God has not forgotten us. Do you remember how part of our Lord's agony was to feel as if His Father had left Him? Do you remember how He cried from the Cross—"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me"? We are passing through the same trials as our Lord. Let us be patient, the long dark night of doubt will pass, and joy cometh in the morning.

Have you known what it is to lie awake all through a long winter night, because your mind was fretted and

troubled about many things? How long the dark hours seemed, how full of nervous fears and anxieties you became as the hours dragged on; but at last there was a faint grey light at your window, and presently the sun shone in, and the shadows and doubt and fear fled away with the darkness. So is it with the night of weeping. Let us wait for the morning, let us look for the light, "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

For some there is *the night of affliction*. The widow sits alone in the darkened house. The children are not there to cheer and comfort her, the home nest is empty. The husband is taken away, and she is left to finish life's journey alone. Everywhere around her are the relics of a happier time. The well-known garments, that he shall never wear again, hang there in her sight. The book he was reading, the work he was busy on, the last lines his hand had written, are before her; these things are terribly hard to bear. I know how dark that night of weeping is. But let us be patient. Let us keep fast hold of the Hand of Jesus, and He will lead us through the darkness, it shall come to pass that at eventide it shall be light, and by-and-bye we shall look up and see, no longer through our tears, the morning without clouds, since such joy as passeth man's understanding cometh in the morning.

For some there is *the night of disappointment*. We make our plans, and they come to nothing. We build our house, and it falls to pieces. We set our hearts

upon something, and it remains beyond our reach. We long for active work, and we are crippled and helpless. We desire some special sphere of usefulness, and we are placed in a totally different one. Then we are bitterly disappointed because we cannot understand God's dealings with us. But why should we? Is the ignorant man able to read that book which is full of wisdom and beauty? So we cannot understand *now* why God chastens us, and takes away what we desire, or refuses what we long for. God's work on our lives is full of wisdom and beauty like the book, but it is a sealed book to us, we cannot read it *now*. The child just learning his letters turns from the book with weariness, and impatience, and disgust. But the time comes when he can read, and then he delights in the book, and finds new beauty in every page. You watch an artist at work on a picture, and you see only some daubs of colour, and you turn away disappointed. But the artist says—Wait awhile, the picture is not finished yet. And after a time you look again, and what seemed a mass of confusion is a lovely picture. So with our lives, we cannot understand how God is writing our life's story, painting our life's picture. In the dimness of the night things look strange and out of place; God whispers to us—"What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." If we put our life in God's Hands we shall see and understand one day that He did all for the best, joy cometh in the morning.

For others again, for us all, there is the *night of*

sorrow for our sin. The loving child will go to bed and weep bitterly if it has offended its parents by a fault. So the child of God knows no sorrow so keen as the sorrow for sin. If our thoughts never trouble us, if our sins never cause us pain, we are no true sons of God. The eyes which never wept for a fault shall never behold the joys of Paradise. Everyone whose heart has been touched by the Holy Spirit has his night of weeping for sin. He remembers the past, the follies and sins of his youth, the neglected opportunities and lost chances of his manhood, the duties which he has left undone, the foolish and angry words which he has spoken, the coldness and indifference of his service to God ; every man, if he be a true man of God, is forced to cry with Saul, "I have played the fool, and erred exceedingly." And this night of weeping, this time of repentance, is precious to us. Our tears are like the waters of Jordan which washed Naaman free of his leprosy. As says a saint of old, "Our tears are a kind of silent prayers, which though they say nothing, yet they obtain pardon ; and though they plead not a man's cause, yet they procure mercy from God's Hands." (S. Ambrose.) So it was with S. Peter. He said nothing in answer to the sad reproachful look of the Master Whom he had denied, but he went out and wept bitterly. Never had S. Peter seen so clearly as when his eyes were bathed in those bitter tears of repentance, and after that night of weeping there came the joy of pardon in the morning. David after his fall


cried, "My sin is ever before me." S. Peter, says the legend, wept whenever he heard the cock crow ; we too often go on our way and forget what manner of men we are. We sin like David or like Peter, but we do not repent with them. May the Holy Spirit show us our sins, may He lead us into the valley of humiliation and the night of weeping, that our heaviness may be turned into joy, the joy of that morning when Jesus shall say to us—I will, be thou clean ; go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee.

Sermon XII.

PATIENT PRAYER.

ROMANS XII. 12.

" Continuing instant in prayer. "

F there is one virtue which we need more than another in this troublesome world it is patience. To be impatient, restive under the lash of sorrow, or the yoke of service, is natural to us; patience is an acquired habit, something not born with us, but learnt by degrees. It is one of the fruits of the Spirit, and it is given to us in answer to prayer. S. Paul bids us to be patient in tribulation, and then goes on to tell us *how* we can be patient—we are to continue instant in prayer. There are just three points which I wish to bring briefly before you now. First, that we must all pass through tribulation in this world. Next, that the way to bear our tribulation patiently is to pray. Thirdly, how and when we ought to pray.

First, *we must all pass through tribulation in this world.* We all know that by experience; there is no one who will offer to contradict that statement. Those lines on your faces tell their story, we all have sorrow's hand-

writing on us, clearly to be read of all men. It is a handwriting which everyone knows, which everyone can read. Have you known what it is to look through an album of photographs which you have been collecting for years? It is melancholy work. The pictures tell us of change, and decay, and death. There is our own picture, taken years ago, when we were young and active and healthy, and we can scarcely believe that we, with our dim eyes, and aching limbs, and bowed shoulders could ever have looked so. There is a picture of the Church where our child was baptized, and we know that the child grew up to be laid beneath the same grey Church's shadow. There are pictures of our old home and our old friends, and of each we are forced to say—Gone, or dead. Whether we have the picture album or not, we all have the pictures in our hearts. Memory is our picture gallery, and we all walk in it at times. Some of your thoughts, I doubt not, are flying, even while I speak, to a sick bed where a little child tosses in pain, to an empty cradle, to a new-made grave. Yes, the great teacher, sorrow, is ever walking among us, and giving us lessons hard to be learned. But, my brethren, try to look upon sorrow as the *teacher*, not the enemy. Learn to see that the hand which wounds is yet guiding you to better things, that the dark pathway of trouble leads onward to the light.

When people are travelling abroad they have to pass through a dark tunnel cut through the mountains, a

place where the timid shrink with fear ; but the travellers look forward, knowing that presently they shall pass out of the dark tunnel into the bright plains of Italy. So our life here on earth is often dark and gloomy, full of fears and anxieties ; but we must look forward, we are travelling towards the better land ; it is dark now, but the day will break, and the shadows flee away. The room must be darkened before we can see the beautiful pictures of the magic-lantern ; and some of the fairest and best gifts of God can only be seen by us when our home is darkened by sorrow, and our eyes are wet with tears. When sorrow comes and lays its hand upon us, let us recognize it as our teacher.

Sometimes a man says in the time of trouble that he wishes he had never been born. Surely it is fitter for us to say—I have been born, let me ask the Lord what I was born for. God has sent us into His great school, the world, and He is shaping us and training us for the great hereafter. Shall we murmur because the discipline is sharp, and the punishments more numerous than the prizes ? We are God's grain, and here, in this world, we are on the threshing-floor. Shall we wonder that the sharp blow falls upon us to separate the good from the evil, the chaff from the wheat ? A man who afterwards rose to a high position of usefulness was, as a boy, sickly and a cripple. One day he was watching a number of boys playing football, all healthy, strong, and active. The cripple's face was sad and discontented, and someone asked him if he did not wish

himself like those boys. He answered, sadly, "Yes." "Well," said the other, "God gave them health, and education, and strength to help them to be of some account in the world. Did it never strike you that God gave you your lame leg for the same reason, to make a man of you?" The hard lesson was learnt, and the cripple found that his affliction could be a blessing, and taught him to work instead of to murmur. So with us all. God never takes anything away from us without giving us something in its place. Those very troubles and losses through which we must pass are sent to make men, good men, of us. God shapes us in many different ways, as the sculptor carves out different forms from different pieces of stone. Some need the strokes of the chisel more than others, and some hard natures need many sharp sorrows to form them.

Next, *if we are to bear our tribulation patiently, we must pray*. Sorrow without God is unbearable, it drives men to madness, to drink, to suicide. If we want to go through the dark time of trouble safely, we must keep hold of God's Hand. Have you ever known what it is to find yourself in a strange place on a very dark night, without the least knowing your way? Such a position is one of danger, doubt, and even fear. You cannot see your road, and all is dark. Then a friend who knows the way takes you by the hand, and says—Keep close to me, and so he guides you through the darkness into light. Brethren, in the dark sad hours of sorrow

and anxiety take the Hand of Jesus in prayer. He knows the way, none better, for He trod the path of sorrow for our sakes. He bids us keep close to Him, to hold Him in the Sacrament, to cling to Him in prayer, and He will lead us out of darkness into light.

Thirdly, *how and when ought we to pray?* S. Paul says, if we are to be patient in tribulation, we must continue instant in prayer. That means, I think, that we must *persevere* in our prayers, not pray by fits and starts, now and again. I fear there is more neglect of prayer among us than is generally supposed. Some people never pray, others only pray now and then. S. Paul teaches us to make a habit of prayer, to speak to God regularly and persistently, to keep on praying. If a man is struggling with the waves of a stormy sea, his only chance is to seize the rope thrown to him, and to hold fast. If he lets go, he is lost. Brethren, we who are out in the waves of this troublesome world have our safeguard, that is prayer, it is our rope, and we must never let go of it for a moment.

Prayer is also our weapon with which we may defend ourselves in the battle against sin and temptation. Every country almost has its legends of a strange and magic sword, and it was the custom in old days to give a name to the warrior's favourite weapon. Thus Mahomet had three swords, which he called the *trenchant*, the *beater*, and the *deadly*, and Julius Cæsar named his sword *the yellow death*. The story of the great warrior, Siegfried, tells us that he possessed a

wondrous sword, which had been made by no mortal hand, and with which he killed giants. Even after the warrior's death the sword continued to slay his enemies. In the old world legends I see a truth, we have a sword which we name *prayer*, none can use it except those who believe in God ; it is a weapon made by no mortal hand, but given us from Heaven ; it slays all giants of doubt, or fear, or pain, or temptation, and even after our death it avails to help us against our enemies.

Who, then, are they who ought to pray, and *when* ought they to pray ? The Gospel answers the question : "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." *Men* ought always to pray. That means mankind, men, women, and children. Everyone ought to pray. The Gospel does not tell us that prayer is only for the saint, for the man who is living a holy life, for him who is a regular Church-goer. Prayer is for all mankind, like God's free air and sunshine. It is not for a privileged few, but for everybody. And prayer is a duty ; men *ought* always to pray ; God expects it of them, He is listening for their prayers.

Someone may say that he does not feel fit to pray to God, he has not prayed for years. Then there is all the more reason for him to pray now. If you were sinking in deep water you would not hesitate about crying out for help. Well, you are in very deep water indeed, if you are living without prayer. The waters will go even over your soul if you are not delivered. You have not prayed for a long time, you say, pray now, pray hard ;

cry out to the Lord in your trouble, and He will deliver you out of your distress.

Another may say—I am not fit to pray to God, I am a drunkard, or an unclean liver. Of course you are not *fit* to draw near to God, no one is ; we are of unclean lips, and we dwell among a people of unclean lips, but you may pray all the same. That poor tramp by the roadside who never entered a Church in his life, that poor lost woman roaming about the midnight streets, that poor weak creature who is drowning his manhood and ruining his health with strong drink, all these may pray, are bidden to do so ; men ought always to pray.

A man may go up to someone in a high position and apologize for addressing him, in doubt whether he will be listened to. The road to God's audience chamber is always clear to us, His ear is always open to our prayers ; men ought always to pray. There is always room before the mercy-seat, room for you who have fallen into many and great transgressions, room for you who have made a mock at prayer hitherto, room for those who are ignorant and foolish ; they can at least say—Lord, help me ; Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner. Your hands may have been stained by many sins, but still you may lift them in prayer to-night. Your lips may have spoken many evil words and cruel sentences, yet they may murmur a prayer for help and pardon now. Who, then, is to pray ? The answer is everyone. And *when* ought we to pray ? Again the Gospel teaches us. Men ought

always to pray. That is, under all conditions and circumstances. Just as there is no place or circumstance which is free from danger, or trouble, or temptation, so there is none where we cannot pray. Wherever we can breathe we can pray, and prayer is the breath of our soul. You would not live many minutes in a place where there was no air. I tell you that you cannot be safe in any place where you do not pray. People say—I pray sometimes. That is not enough, that will not keep you spiritually alive. You must pray regularly, you must keep on praying. Especially pray when troubles come. I do not say that your prayer will lock the door against the trouble, and keep it from you, but it will make you strong enough to bear it patiently. He who is instant in prayer is patient in tribulation.

The trouble may be in your *home life*. There may be things there to fret, and vex, and try you every day. A man's home is often a battle-field where terrible battles are fought, glorious victories won. But they are only won on our knees. To you who are troubled about many things, whose home life is full of worry and vexation, I say, "Pray without ceasing." Prayer is the only tonic which will brace you up to bear your trouble. If it is a *business trouble*, pray about it. Nothing untangles knots and smoothes away difficulties like prayer. Let all your work and your business be salted with prayer, none other is pure and wholesome. If you had some very heavy weights to lift, and found that you were quite unable to move them by yourself,

what would you do? You would not be so foolish as to strain at and struggle with what is too heavy for you, you would get someone to help you. So must it be with our sorrows. There are burdens which we cannot bear alone. There are troubles which would crush us to death if we tried to carry them unaided. Ask Jesus to help you; a burden is so much more easily carried by two than one, and He Who bore His Cross for you once, will aid you to bear your cross now.

Brethren, try to take this lesson home to-day, "Men ought always to pray and not to faint." Why do you faint so often under your burden, why do you stumble so often on the upward path? Because you do not pray enough. What shall you pray for? Pray for everything, great or small, but above all pray for patience to bear your sorrows.

"O wait, impatient heart!
As winter waits, her song-birds fled,
And every nestling blossom dead.
Beyond the purple seas they sing!
Beneath soft snows they sleep.
They only sleep. Sweet patience keep,
And wait, as winter waits the spring."

Sermon XIII.

THE KEYNOTE.

TITUS III. 2.

"Gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men."



MEEKNESS and gentleness furnish the keynote of Christianity. They are two fruits of the Spirit which grow close together. No qualities are more dwelt upon by the writers of the New Testament. S. Paul tells the Galatians that the fruit of the Spirit is gentleness, meekness. He bids Titus to warn his hearers that they are to speak evil of no man, but to be "gentle, shewing all meekness to all men." If our religion does not make us meek-spirited and gentle, we may be sure that it is not the religion of Christ. It shows how little we really understand the Gospel teaching after having it for nineteen hundred years, when we see and hear the mistakes which are commonly made about meekness and gentleness. Instead of being looked upon as a blessed thing to be meek and gentle, the world regards meekness with contempt. It considers a meek man as a poor creature, a coward, a weakling, who allows himself to be trampled on because

he has not spirit enough to resist. Whilst the noisy, rough, pushing person in the crowd of life is admired and praised, the gentle, patient worker is thrust aside with scorn. The world has its prizes, its crowns, its high places, its wealth for the man who advertises himself, whose one object is to take good care of himself and his own interests; it looks with pity and ridicule upon the quiet man who does not push nor make a noise, it may praise him sometimes, but it leaves him to starve. But the way of the world is not often God's way, and it is with God's way that we as Christian people have to do. Learn, then, that it is quite a mistake to suppose that a meek person and a coward without courage or spirit are the same.

It is written of Moses, "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." Yet no one would say of Moses, the greatest man of his age, the wise law-giver, the brave, strong soldier, that he was a coward, or without spirit. He was full of spirit, and one specially given to lose his temper and fly into a passion, but because he was led by the Spirit of God he was able to control that temper, and be meek, and patient, and gentle under the constant provocations of a stiff-necked and disobedient people. No, meekness and gentleness do not mean cowardice and weakness, they mean the highest sort of courage. They mean that a man has a temper, but learns, by God's grace, to keep it in check; that he is naturally impatient, but schools himself to wait quietly;

that he may have a quick, passionate speech, but that he tries to keep his mouth as it were with a bridle, and, like his Master, when he is reviled, reviles not again. When we speak of meekness and gentleness with contempt, we forget that our Lord Jesus Christ is the perfect pattern of those virtues. He says, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." He says, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." He bids us, when we are invited to a feast, to go and sit down in the lowest room. How different is this teaching from the noisy, pushing policy of the world. The world has no school where we may learn meekness and gentleness, it is only by coming to Jesus Christ that we shall master that lesson.

Saul of Tarsus, full of pride and fiery zeal, riding to Damascus, knew nothing about gentleness and meekness. He began to learn that lesson when he was brought to the earth, and the Lord Jesus called him into His school. S. Peter, with his ready tongue and ready sword, knew nothing of being meek and gentle, but S. Peter learnt his first lesson when he went out from the presence of his Lord and wept bitterly. So with ourselves, brethren, meekness and gentleness are not born with us, they are precious gifts which come of the Lord; we must go to school, we must learn of Christ day by day, we must remember that when we speak of "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild," He has left us an example that we should be like Him. I fear that

we are most of us very dull scholars in Christ's school. Take this lesson alone, that we must be meek and gentle; how few of us have learnt it at all. The slightest thing excites our anger, or touches our pride, and we who profess to be followers of the gentle Jesus, are violent, passionate, revengeful. I think we too often look upon Jesus in the Gospel as a beautiful picture to admire and wonder at, rather than as a living example which we are bound to imitate. We say to ourselves—These grand teachings about humility and gentleness, about giving up our own way, about cutting off the right hand of offence, and about loving our enemies, are all very good, but they are not for such as I am; in fact, we look upon the Gospel as excellent in theory, but impossible in practice. When we talk in this way it is not that we *cannot* live the life of the Gospel, but that we do not *wish* to. We love the besetting sin too well to cut it off and cast it from us. We are too full of pride and self-seeking to wish to become meek and gentle; we say the feast of good things in the Gospel is excellent, but I pray thee have me excused. Well, if this be the case; if we are not prepared to live the life laid down by our Master, Jesus, it is time for us to give up calling ourselves Christians. If we do not want to be meek and gentle, we cannot expect to follow the Lamb of God.

What is the example which our Lord sets us in this matter? He tells us plainly that we must learn of Him to be meek and lowly, and the first thing He

would have us to do is to *forget ourselves*. Selfishness is at the root of nearly all our faults—

“Love thyself last. The world shall be made better
By thee, if this brief motto forms thy creed.
Go follow it in spirit and in letter,
This is the Christ-religion which men need.”

There are people who are always thinking and talking about themselves, just as there are people who always write or cut their own name whenever they can. The example of Jesus Christ is just the opposite of this. He pleased not Himself, He lived and died for others, He might have said to His disciples with perfect truth—I am greater than you all, because He is the Lord of Heaven and earth. He might have said—I am wiser than you all, because He is the All-wise, to Whom all hearts be open. He might have said—I am better than you all, because in Him was no sin. What He did say was—I am among you as He that serveth. Yes, He took upon Him the form of a servant.

My brethren, you who are so soon angry if you do not get the front place and the highest honour, look at the example of your Master—I am among you as He that serveth. I am not come to be ministered unto, but to minister. Oh, what a mockery and a sham our Christianity must appear in the sight of God when He sees us struggling and pushing to get into the front places, and grudging if we be not satisfied. There is, as a fact, very little competition for the lowest place, we all want to be at the top; but remember it is that

lowest place, the foot of the Cross, which is the true position for the Christian. "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of the Lord, than to dwell in the tents of ungodliness." If we imitate our Master we must be among them that serve, the servants of God and of our fellow-men. As long as a man is always thinking and talking about himself, he has no time to help other people. When love of self fills up all our heart, there is no room for the love of God there. I do not know any better prayer for our daily use than this—Teach me to forget myself. If we would be meek and gentle towards others, we must think of them and forget ourselves. I have heard of a child who had a singing bird, of which he was very proud. His mother fell ill, and the singing of the bird worried her delicate nerves. Then the child carried the bird-cage to a distant part of the house, but still the bird's singing could be heard. One day, without saying a word to anyone, the child removed the bird from the house and gave it away. His mother said to him, "I thought you loved the bird." And the child answered, "So I do, but I love you more."

Again, if we would show the qualities of meekness and gentleness, let us try as far as possible not to *talk about ourselves*. Some people's conversation is entirely about their own affairs, and it is very wearisome to other people. Very few autobiographies are interesting to anyone but the author. People who are always talking about self become very thin-skinned, they think

every word spoken is meant for an insult, or a slight, and they are miserable in consequence. The ancients have a fable about Narcissus, who gave his name to a sweet-scented flower. He was a youth of great beauty, and seeing his face reflected in a fountain, he fell in love with it, and having tried in vain to reach the lovely image, he died of disappointment. Now there are a great many people like Narcissus; they fall in love with themselves, and spend all their time in contemplating their own charms and cleverness.

Again, to be meek and gentle means *to speak kindly and lovingly of other people*. Remember the example of Jesus in this respect. He never said a word to hurt a sensitive spirit or a wounded soul. He bore patiently with stupid, unjust, cruel, ungrateful people. He always had a word of sympathy for the sad, the sinful, the lonely. The slightest sign of penitence and sorrow for sin was welcomed by words of cheer and encouragement. A bruised reed was not broken, nor the smoking flax quenched. Among ourselves there are people who pass for very good Christians who yet habitually speak hardly and unjustly of their neighbours. They seem to have steeped all their words in vinegar and gall. These people perhaps mean to be kind, it is only their manner, they say. But sometimes manner is everything to us; a tender heart will not bear rough handling any more than a tender limb, and the precious balms of kindness are of no use to us if they break our head. Brethren, cultivate a gentle manner, gentle

speech, try to imitate the gentleness of Jesus Christ. If we are to learn to speak kindly and lovingly of others and to them, we must not be always on the look-out for their faults. Some people seem to carry a magnifying glass about with them, through which they look at every little spot or wrinkle in another's character.

There is some good in everyone, if we would but search for it. Even if we are disappointed in people sometimes, that is better than never finding good anywhere. S. Paul says that we are to be "gentle, shewing all meekness unto *all men*." Now that is a hard saying for some of us. We know very well that we are not living in Paradise, and in the company of angels. The longer we stay in this world, the more we learn that there are a great many disagreeable people in it. We meet with those whose manner is unpleasant, who speak evil of us, who do not understand us, with whom we have nothing in common. Well, are we to show meekness and gentleness towards these people? Most certainly. There is the great test of our Christianity. Perhaps you say that it is asking too much of you; that if you are insulted, you pay back in the same coin; that if anyone injures you, you try to be even with him. These kind of sentiments would be very well if we were heathens, and knew not Christ.

Before the Gospel came into the world the rule was an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. It is not so now. If you profess to follow Him, Who

when He was reviled, reviled not again, Who when He was falsely accused, opened not His mouth, Who when He was injured, prayed for His persecutors, you must learn a different lesson. We are not told indeed that we are to take disagreeable and unfriendly people to our bosom, and make them our friends, that would be impossible. But though we are not bidden to *like* them, we are bidden to *love* them, and to show them kindness, being "gentle, shewing all meekness to all men." When Dr. Hook, the brave Vicar of Leeds, first went there, he met with great opposition. At a public meeting a man attacked him with all sorts of abuse for being a High Churchman. Then the Vicar rose up, and said, "I will answer my friend from a Church point of view, from a High Church point of view, from a *very* High Church point of view—I forgive him."

Sermon XIV.

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST.

ROMANS VIII. 9.

"If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."



WHEN S. Ignatius was brought before his judges, they said to him, "You are called Theophorus, the God-bearer. What mean you by that title?" And the Saint answered, "I am a God-bearer, God, the Holy Spirit, dwells in me." Then they accused him of having spoken blasphemy, and put him to a cruel death; but those who saw Ignatius die, knew that he spoke the truth. God was in him, and shone out through the poor weak body, as the light of the sanctuary shines out through a lattice window. S. Paul speaks very often of the necessity of having God dwelling in us. He says, "Christ liveth in me." He talks about being filled with the Spirit, and in the text he tells us that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." Here, then, is the test as to whether or not we are Christ's people; not merely the fact of our Baptism, nor our confession of faith, nor our attendance at the services of the Church, but whether

the Spirit of Christ is in us, and in all things directs and rules our lives, and acts, and words. "If a man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

But some man will say—I am baptized, I am admitted thereby into God's family, the Church; I am a Christian. Yes, this is all true, but although you are a Christian, it does not follow that you are a *good* Christian. You were made a son of God by adoption, but you may have proved a prodigal, disobedient, an alien from your Father's House. A man may bear the name of a soldier in a certain regiment, but he may be a disgrace to it; and a man may bear the name of a Christian, and yet be unworthy of it. Names count for nothing. We may profess and call ourselves Christians, but if we "have not the Spirit of Christ, we are none of His." It is not a man's name, and a man's dress, that we must go by, we must judge the man by his life.

What, then, is meant by having the Spirit of Christ? It means that God the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and from the Son, dwells in our mortal bodies, and makes them temples of God. The Holy Ghost is called the Spirit of Christ because He comes to us as the gift of Christ, and because He enables us to live a Christ-like life. We know when a Church or a house is empty and deserted, because all is cold and dark there; but if the Church or house is full of life and worship, we see the light streaming out through the windows. If the Holy Spirit of Christ is in a man, we know it because the divine light streams out of him,

and shows itself in his words, and acts, and manners, and life. It is not the loud profession which is a sure sign of a Christian, but the one test—a Christ-like life. We must be like S. Ignatius, like S. Paul, *God-bearers*, Christ-bearers; every true son of God is Theophorus, God-bearer, is Christopher, one who bears Christ. The Holy Spirit was given to us in our Baptism and our Confirmation, but if we have not set a right value on that precious gift, if we have not kept the sacred fire burning before God in our lives, the gift has gone from us, the fire is extinguished. A lamp cannot burn in certain kinds of foul atmosphere, the light of the Holy Spirit cannot continue to exist in certain lives. The foolish virgins had their lamps as well as the wise, but they took no heed to keep them trimmed, and so they flickered and went out. Ah, my brethren, there are some of us who were better people once than we are now. The Holy Spirit dwelt in our body and made it a sanctuary. The light of holiness shone out in our lives. What if we are forced to say sadly now—The light has died out in the temple of my life, I have neglected the gift which was in me, my lamp is gone out. I am going down hill, *and in the dark*. There is a prayer which should be most often on our lips—Renew a right spirit within me; take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.

If, then, we are Christ's people we shall have the Spirit of Christ in us, and that is the greatest possession which we can have. A man may have wealth, success,

fame in this life, and yet be very unhappy. He knows that he must die and leave all this behind him, and if the Holy Spirit is not his ruler and guide his death means a going forth shuddering into the unseen. On the other hand, the man who has Christ in him, the hope of glory, can be contented and happy in any lot. He may be poor in the world's eyes, but he possesses treasure which rust and moth cannot corrupt. He may be unknown to men, but he is well known to God ; his name may be written in no earthly book, but it is written in the Lamb's Book of Life. If a man has the Spirit of Christ, he has everything ; if not, he has nothing.

How, then, will the Spirit of Christ in a man be shown ? Not so much by what he says, as by what he does. There are people who are very strict and orthodox Churchmen, like the Pharisees of old, but they have not the Spirit of Christ. If a man is selfish, passionate, proud, revengeful, the name of Christian, and his attendance at Church, do not avail him. " If a man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." When a man offers himself as a candidate for a situation in a certain kind of employment, he may give himself a very good testimonial, and declare himself most fitted for the place. But the employer is not satisfied with this ; he says—Let me see what you can do. So our Master, Jesus, does not care much for those who call most loudly—Lord, Lord ; He looks at our acts, to see if we are living the life of the Gospel,

which we profess to believe. If the Spirit of Christ be in us, it will enable us to lead Christ-like lives. It will aid us to be as He was in the world. It will guide us to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto Him. That is the only sort of Christianity worth the name. It is not the loud profession, the stern judgment of others, the platform speech, or the trumpet of self-praise loudly blown, which show the Christian, but the humble imitation of Christ's most holy life. "He who *doeth* righteousness is righteous," not he who talks about it.

Of course, the Spirit of Christ is shown in men's lives in many different ways, just as the light streaming through a painted window makes many different coloured patterns on the floor. There is one special point, however, in which we must try to imitate the Master: if His Spirit be in us, we shall, like Him, go about doing good, and we shall do good with *meekness and gentleness*. Some philanthropists are always proclaiming themselves from the housetops. I believe most good is done by the quiet workers, whom few people know or notice, and the greatest gifts of charity presented by those who are nameless. Christ left His Church to carry on His ministry of love, and gentleness, and comfort, and sympathy, and it is the duty of every son of God in his place to do what he can to imitate the ministry of the Son of God.

We must *try to do good*. That, of course, is a very wide subject. How can I do good? you ask. Do what

good you can, God expects no more. You need not push, or climb, or travel to foreign lands to do good. You need not go to Africa, or even out of your own parish. *Be* good, and *do* good, just where you are. It is sometimes said of an even-tempered person that wherever you meet him he is always the same. So should it be with Christ's people, they should be always the same, always gentle, meek servants of Christ, ready to do good wherever they are. If we are good in ourselves, that is, if the Spirit of Christ be in us, we shall never be without an opportunity of doing some good somewhere. There is always something to be done ; a sad person to be cheered, a weak person to be helped on the road, a little child to be made happy, the hungry birds to be fed.

Some of you are parents, and your sphere of life is limited to your home and family, and the work whereby you earn your bread. There is your field for doing good, and there is none more important. A young mother said that when she took her little boy in her arms for the first time, and the babe looked into her face and clung to her, she felt what a good woman she would need to be to make him a good man. Every good mother feels this. If you train up your children to be godly, honest, praying people, you are doing good, the greatest good. You are helping to build up the Church and State on right principles. If you are leading others right you are doing good. A girl who had fallen into evil ways said to her friend—Mother

does not care where I go. Ah, mothers and fathers, if that is true of any of you, if you do not care where your children go, or what company they keep, when they fall, God will require it at your hands.

Every day we live we are doing good or harm to some soul. If we do no good, we do some harm, our neglect is injuring someone. If you parents do not set a good example to your children, you are ruining them, although you may not be living openly sinful lives. Eli was a man of God, but his sons perished for want of a strong hand and a good influence. We are like sowers in the field, every day our acts, and words, and behaviour are seeds dropped into the hearts of others. Every day we are sowing, and every day the seed is growing for good or evil. Brethren, it is an awful thought that every act and word of ours is a seed which will grow up and affect a soul through all eternity. I do not think men would sin deliberately if they remembered that. I do not think a father would swear in the presence of his children, if he stayed to think of the wickedness of poisoning those innocent baby souls, of sowing the seeds of evil in their hearts. I do not think a man would ever be drunken before his children, if he remembered what an awful object lesson he was giving them. If we have the Spirit of Christ we shall try to sow *good* seed wherever we go.

“I dropped a seed beside a path,
And went my busy way,
Till chance, or fate—I say not which—
Led me one summer day

Along the self-same path; and lo!
A flower blooming there,
As fair as eye has looked upon,
And sweet as it was fair."

But we do not always see the flowers and fruit which spring from our sowing. We are called away, and there is no harvest for us to gather, no reward to claim. Never mind that, if we have sown good seed we shall come on the last great day of ingathering and bring our sheaves with us, sheaves which we were never to bind on earth. The good mother who sowed the seed of truth, and purity, and love in her child's heart is gone, and her place knows her no more. But her teaching is not forgotten, the good seed has grown and brought forth the fruit of a holy life, and her children rise up and call her blessed. The seed was sown long ago in childhood, the fruit is here to-day in the shape of a godly manhood. We must not expect always, or even often, to see the result of our work here. A famous organist composed a tune of great beauty, but before he could play the accompaniment and hear it sung in Church he fell ill and died. He was never to listen to the choir in Church singing his beautiful work, but he died with a happy smile on his face, and whispered that he heard the angels singing his tune in Paradise. If we cast good seed upon the waters we shall find it again after many days; the song we were never to sing on earth, the fruit we were never to gather here, the joy we were never to feel, we shall find them all in Paradise.

If we have the Spirit of Christ we shall do all the

good we can *with meekness and gentleness*. The best sermon is the quiet example of a holy life. The sweetest music is the soft answer which turneth away wrath. You do not need any lofty pulpit to preach from, preach the Gospel of love, of meekness, of gentleness by your own fireside, in your home life, in your work and business. Remember at all times that you are sons of God and heirs of eternal life, and try to realize what manner of life yours should be. Look ever to the example of Jesus Christ in all you do. Think—What would my Lord have done under these circumstances? Remember also, that for this life you need the constant guidance of the Holy Spirit. The lamp of holiness will soon grow dim if the sacred oil be neglected. Our chief prayer should be for this leading of the Holy Spirit; “Grant that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts.” Above all, we should utter this prayer at the Altar of the Blessed Sacrament, where Jesus is present and ready to give us most excellent gifts of the Holy Ghost. Try, brethren, to realize the *presence* of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Try to feel that when you kneel there you are, like Mary, at His Feet. A little boy was being prepared for his first Communion, and was taught that Jesus would be present there at the Altar. “Shall we see Him?” asked the child. And the answer was, “We shall not see Him, but we shall *know* that He is there.” That is the faith we need when we make our Communion, we *know* that He is there.

Sermon XV.

PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY.

PHILIPPIANS II. 5.

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”



TRUE Christianity is above all things practical.

It is not a collection of beautiful theories and lofty doctrines only; it is a life, a work. When our Lord Jesus Christ had finished the parable of the Good Samaritan, He did not tell His hearers to go home and think about it, or learn it by heart, or write it out on paper; He said, “Go, and *do* thou likewise.” Christianity does not mean knowing about Christ, and reading about Christ; it means *living* like Christ. If you want to become a musician you may study all the books on the theory of music, but you will never become a player unless you take your two hands and practise every day. So if you want to be a good Christian, it will not be sufficient to know the teaching of the Gospel thoroughly, and to understand the meaning of the original language in which it was written; you must be practical, you must go and do what the Gospel tells you, and live the life there set

before you. There is many an ignorant peasant who could not read a letter of the Greek Testament who is a far better Christian than many a learned scholar, because he loves God and his neighbour, and tries to live a godly, righteous, and sober life as far as he knows how.

If a man desires to become a good painter he studies the pictures of the greatest masters, and never looks at inferior work, if he is wise. But he does something more than this. He does not merely stand and gaze upon a splendid picture day by day; he gets a canvas, and takes his paint brushes, and tries to copy the picture. He feels at first that he shall never be able to produce such a work as that of the master, and he is often disappointed at the result of his efforts, but if he *keeps on trying*, and prays over his work, like the artist Fra Angelico, his pictures grow better and better. It is the same with the Christian life. We must not be content with gazing on the picture of our Lord Jesus Christ as painted in the Gospels. Christianity is practice, not merely contemplation; we must look at the example of Jesus, but we must strive also to imitate it. It would not do for the artist to say—I could never paint a picture like that, and so to put aside his brushes and do nothing. He feels that he must try to copy the picture as nearly as he can. So with ourselves. We must not say—A Christ-like life is impossible in this world and at this day. It is beautiful in theory, but impossible in practice. The example is too lofty, the

ideal far out of reach, so I will not attempt it, but just live the life of the ordinary worldling. I admire the teachings of the Gospel, but they are too high for me. You will never make a true Christian if you talk and act like that. You must go on trying to imitate the Divine example. It takes a man all his life, with daily practice, to become a great musician. It takes a man all his life, with daily practice, to become a good Christian. You will make many mistakes and failures; everyone does. The painter spoils many a canvas, the musician strikes many a false note, the sculptor wastes some marble, but he succeeds if he perseveres. If a man's heart is in his work, if he *loves* it, he will master all difficulties.

So much of our religion is a failure because we are half-hearted about it. If we would only look at the example of Jesus Christ as the young artist looks at the picture of the great master, and feel—I *want* to copy that life, I *want* to live the life of a son of God, and by His help I will, then all would be well. But so many people are satisfied to live the life of the world, and to copy the fashions of their fellow men and women. The man who is content to imitate the poorest pictures will never be a good painter, and he who is willing to be no worse than other people will never become a good Christian. Do you say it is impossible to live a Christ-like life in your business, because it is so full of fraud and deceit? Did you ever try, my brethren? Do you tell me it is impossible to

live a Christ-like life in your workshop, because there is so much there to try the temper ; or in your home, because there is so much poverty and discomfort there ? Remember, Jesus Christ laboured in a workshop, and lived in a poor home, and do not talk about anything being impossible ; ask God, with Whom all things are possible, to help you. No, it is the want of will to be like Christ which hinders our spiritual progress. We are satisfied to remain as we are, and so we never improve.

The want of love for our Master is another hindrance. The painter must be in love with his art if he is to succeed ; we must love Him Whose example we are to copy, or we shall fail utterly. In the olden days Cyrus, the great king, took a certain Tigranes and his wife prisoners. He asked Tigranes what he would give for the liberation of his wife, and Tigranes answered that he loved his wife so dearly that he would willingly lay down his own life for her sake. Then Cyrus, struck by the sight of this great love, set them both free. Tigranes asked his wife what she thought of Cyrus, the beauty of his face, the nobleness of his character, and she answered that she saw nothing but the face of the man who had offered to die for her, "the beauty of that man makes me forget all others." So should we feel towards our Lord Jesus Christ, He Who gave His life for us ; we should forget all else in thinking of Him, and copy no other example than His.

We read of the soldiers at the Crucifixion gambling

in utter indifference at the foot of the Cross, though the Saviour of the world was hanging there close to them, and we wonder at the story. But, my brethren, some of us are doing the same ; we are gambling away our lives in selfish, thoughtless work or pleasure, whilst the Divine example of the life and death of Jesus is before us, and we will not look up. I want you to understand that being a Christian means one thing, and one thing only, it is our profession, and that is to follow the example of our Saviour Christ and be made like unto Him. Our religion is not sentiment, but action. We must do noble things, not dream them, or think about them, or talk about them. Sentimental Christians are very useless creatures.

There are people who are ready to cry over the story of the Prodigal Son, yet they themselves remain by the swine-trough and the husks of sin. They will listen with delight to the history of the Good Samaritan, yet when they themselves see a neighbour in trouble they pass by on the other side. They will hearken to the sad story of the Cross on Good Friday, but they forget that they themselves must crucify the flesh with the sinful lusts and affections ; they look upon the Cross of Jesus, but forget their own. It is the same thing with much of our hymn-singing ; it is mere sentiment, we do not mean what we sing. There are some who will sing about Jesus, meek and lowly, who are neither meek nor lowly themselves, and do not wish to be ; who will say, " Nearer my God to Thee, nearer to

Thee," without the slightest desire for a closer walk with God, or a purer life. It has been truly said that we must *want* what we ask in prayer, or we shall never get it. We must be real, honest, in our prayers, our worship, our praises; we must mean what we say, or we are merely drawing near to God with our lips while our hearts are far from Him. What a terrible amount of hypocrisy there is in our religion and our services! We say words which we do not mean, we express hopes and wishes which are quite contrary to our real desires; we are often hypocrites, acting a part to ourselves, and we do not know it. Be real, my brethren, be honest. Do not profess or call yourselves Christians if you do not mean to try and live a Christ-like life. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

What sort of mind is this? It is a *meek and gentle mind*. The fruit of the Spirit is gentleness and meekness. The greatest character is always the most humble. The smaller a man is the bigger he thinks himself. The Son of God, perfect God and perfect Man, was meek and lowly, who are we that we should be proud and haughty? What have we to be proud of? Our birth? The greatest in the land cannot trace his descent beyond our forefather Adam, whose sin brought death and sorrow into the world, and the lowest in the land can do the same. Our wealth? God gave it us. We talk of *making* money, but after all we are but beggars whose hands are filled by God. We have absolutely nothing which God did not give

us, where then is the excuse for pride? Brethren, if you would live a Christ-like life, pray for a meek and gentle spirit. But you answer me perhaps in this way—It is very easy to preach this kind of doctrine, but you do not know what my life is, nor how I am tried. If you had the worries and business troubles that I have, if you had my work to do, or my home to live in, you would not talk any more about being meek and gentle. Then I answer—What is your Christianity for? Is it not that you may be able to live a holy life, a gentle life, a meek and lowly life under these very circumstances?

In some foreign Churches they show you the relics of a saint inclosed in a glass case, and you are told to advance very reverently and gaze upon them, and then go away, but you must not touch nor handle them. Brethren, the religion of Jesus Christ is not like that, not something to shut up under lock and key, not something to frame and hang up like a picture, but something to take with you into your daily life, your daily toil. You put on your working clothes when you are going into your workshop; well, the Christian's working dress is a meek and quiet spirit, which will help him to keep his temper under provocation, and to give the soft answer which turneth away wrath; which will give him strength to be patient with others, however trying and vexatious; which will make him think about other people first and himself last; if you have not a religion which you can take with you into the

great workshop of the world, which will sanctify all you do and say, you have not the religion of Jesus Christ.

Some people, when they speak about leading a Christ-like, that is a Christian, life, look up to the stars as though they thought their work lay there. Others strain their eyes towards far-off continents and islands of the seas, as though they thought their work lay there. Brethren, just live your life where God has put you. Here in the cottage home in the quiet country, or there in the little stifling city street, or up there in the big castle, or the great house of business. Live the same life, the Christ-like life, wherever you are. The Christian's dress is always the same colour whatever his rank or position, the uniform of all Christ's soldiers is always white. They have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb.

You say, perhaps, that your life and work are very monotonous and commonplace, mere drudgery. So is the life and work of most of us. What we have to do is to live that life and do that work in a Christ-like spirit. Our life-work is not up yonder among the stars, but here below amid the tools and utensils of the working world. Try to salt all you do with the salt of the Gospel. Live and work as under the immediate eye of the Lord Jesus. A writer says that each of our lives is like a sheet of white paper on which we may write a word or two, and then comes the night of death. Let us try to write *good* words in our life's sheet. I tell

you that however commonplace and dull your life may be, you can make it holy, Christ-like, if you will. You can be good sons, good husbands, good neighbours, wherever you are. You can be humble-minded, gentle, kindly to all men. Every home is a Heaven or Hell in miniature, just according as the Spirit of Christ is or is not there. God does not want most of us to do some great thing, He wants us to be good Christians under commonplace circumstances. Have you ever watched a man breaking stones by a road-side? It seems dull, uninteresting work enough day after day. But in time his task is finished, and the stones he has hammered day by day now form a solid road on which men may walk to do their work and to worship their God. So is it with the acts and words of daily life; they may seem trifles, but rightly used they make a road whereon both we and others may climb to Heaven.

Sermon XVI.

THE CONSECRATED LIFE.

COLOSSIANS III. 17.

"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus."

IN that short text is contained the very essence of Christianity. A Christian is one who in body, soul, and spirit is consecrated unto God, who does whatever he has to do in the Name of the Lord Jesus. In some of our schools there are what are called *half-timers*, who give half of their time to school and half to working for their living. Now there must be no half-timers in Christ's school. We are not bidden to keep our religion for certain occasions, to spend one day a week in the Name of the Lord, to go as it were into the Holy of Holies, like the Jewish High Priest, once a year. Our body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and wherever we are we ought to keep it a sanctuary, a holy place. The priest must lay aside his vestments when the service is over, the labourer must put off his working clothes when he lies down to

rest ; but sleeping or waking we must never be without the Christian's garment of holiness. We must never take a holiday from Christ's school, or go off duty as Christ's servants.

It is written, "Holiness becometh Thine House for ever," and so holiness must be the mark of each member of that House, of us who belong to the Holy Church, at all times and under all circumstances. S. Paul, in the text, does not tell us that we are to offer a sacrifice in the Name of the Lord at certain fixed times, say once a week, and then to consecrate all the rest of our lives to our own devices. He would have us make our whole existence a sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God. He does not tell us to praise and glorify God only now and then in Church, but in *all* we do to give thanks to God and the Father by Jesus Christ. It is such a mistake to shut up religion inside our Churches ; to imagine that our manner of life inside God's House and out in the world should be two different things ; to have one set of sentiments for Sundays, and another for all the remaining days of the week. A Christian should be always the same, just as near to Christ in the workshop as in the sanctuary, as reverent in his daily life as at the Altar.

We sometimes read that some great personage has laid aside his title and rank for a time, and is travelling abroad under another name. A true servant of God will never lay aside the name and character of a Christian. The banner under which we serve is "our

glorious *Semper Eadem*," always the *same*. We are to do all we do in the Name of the Lord. Now that does not mean that we are to neglect our work or business, and set up for preachers. The best preachers are honest, godly men, the best sermon is a good example. I would have you all preachers of the Gospel in one way, preach in the shop, the forge, the counting-house, the drawing-room, the nursery, but let your sermon be a practical one, a holy, gentle life. When our Lord came to call men into the Church He did not always take them away from their worldly business. He did not take all the fishermen away from their nets, or all the publicans away from the receipt of custom. S. Peter went fishing after he became an Apostle, and S. Paul laboured with his hands at his tent-making that he might not be burdensome to his brethren. Some women were called to the life of devotion like Mary, others to consecrate themselves in the kitchen like Martha.

Being a Christian, then, means being consecrated to God, taking our religion into all we do. The message of the Gospel is the same for every class of men, for those who work with their brains and those who work with their hands, for those who are lofty and those who are lowly; it is the same message to the palace and the cottage, the drawing-room and the kitchen—"Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus." God is no respecter of persons, rich men and poor men are only *men* in His sight. It has been

well said that at the Day of Judgment the question will not be—Were you wealthy or were you poor? But—If you were wealthy, how did you use your wealth; and if you were poor, how did you bear your poverty? Never try to separate your religion from your work, consecrate your labour to the service of Jesus, Who Himself laboured. Try to realize that you are brethren of Him Who toiled in the Nazareth workshop, and that labour is

“A blessing now, a curse no more,
Since He, Whose Name we breathe with awe,
The coarse mechanic's vesture wore,
A poor man toiling with the poor.”

“Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus.” We are bidden to do all in His Name because we are called by it ourselves, we were baptized into His Name. Therefore we ought to be proud of the Name of the Master Whom we serve. In former times the servants and followers of a nobleman wore their master's badge upon their sleeve, that all men might see whom they served, and they were ready at any moment to fight for the honour of his name. We serve the Lord Christ, we bear His sacred badge and symbol, the Cross, we follow One Whose Name is above every name, and we ought to be ready in all we do to honour it. A good soldier is proud of the regiment to which he belongs, he is proud of its name. He says—I belong to the Devonshire regiment, or the Yorkshire regiment, or what not, and he thinks

there is no other regiment like it, and he tries to keep up the honour of its name. We should feel that we are soldiers of Christ, that we belong to the Holy Catholic Church, and so in all we do we should glorify the Name of our Leader.

The soldier thinks—I must never forget that I am a soldier of the Queen. The Christian thinks—I must never forget that I am a soldier of Christ. S. Paul says—Whatsoever ye do in *word*, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus. He bids us consecrate our speech to the service of Christ. That is a weak point with many of us. There are people who would not willingly *do* a wrong thing, who habitually *say* wrong things. There are regular and devout Church-goers who at home lose their temper very easily, and speak unadvisedly with their lips. There are husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, very good people in a way, who are constantly saying unkind, spiteful words to one another. There are people who will come to Church and sing God's praises heartily, and then go away and speak uncharitably about a neighbour's character. Brethren, take heed to your words, remember Him Whose Name you bear, it is the Name of Him Who spake as never man spake, consecrate your tongue to His service. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, as becometh saints; holiness has been defined as being clean inside, and certainly it means having a clean tongue, for by our words we shall be justified, and by

our words we shall be condemned. If a great and famous house of business sends round a representative, we expect to find that man's life and conversation worthy of those whom he represents. Well, every Christian man represents Christ and His Church; he is a sample of Christianity, so to speak, and woe to us if in every act and word we do not show ourselves worthy of the Name which we represent.

Whatsoever ye do in *deed*, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus. When the Spanish sailors went sailing all over the world discovering fresh countries, they never came to any new land without setting up the standard of Spain, and taking possession of the place in the name of Ferdinand and Isabella, the King and Queen of their country. So wherever we go we should show our colours, we should set up the banner of the Cross of Christ, and make it clear to all men Whose we are and Whom we serve. It is in the little things of life, the little acts of courtesy and politeness, that a gentleman shows himself most quickly, so nothing is too small for a servant of Christ to consecrate to his Master's service.

He who does all in the Name of the Lord Jesus will always be ready to do acts of *kindness*. Charles Kingsley on the way to the pulpit would stoop down to pick up a caterpillar and place it in safety. That act showed the servant of Christ as fully as the sermon which followed.

He who does all in the Name of the Lord Jesus will

always try to *think and speak kindly of others*. When I hear people blackening the character of a neighbour, sneering at this one's religion, shaking their head at that one's sincerity, I cannot but wonder where their Christianity is. A great and good man, William Wilberforce, used to say, "I have spent all my life in trying to find good in my fellow-men, and I have been disappointed but twice." Those who never look for anything but the faults in others will never find anything else, as a man who is cutting down the brambles is too busy to see the flowers. If people go on speaking evil of each other they must give up calling themselves Christians. It is a terrible fact that a great number of people hate each other far more than they hate sin.

Again, he who does all in the Name of the Lord Jesus will try to do his work *as well as possible*. The servant does his best under his master's eye. Our Master's Eye is ever upon us. There would be no more shams and fraud in our trade, no more bad material and scamped work, if every man would put his religion into his business, and do all that he had to do in the Name of the Lord Jesus. It is not surprising that some heathen tribes abroad refused to become Christians when they saw what manner of lives were led by those who professed to be Christ's servants. Brethren, you are God's coin, the Name of the Lord Jesus is stamped upon you; be sincere, be honest, ring true. Whatever your position in life may be,

adorn it by doing all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, then you will make the humblest position, the commonest work, divine.

Again, he who does all in the Name of the Lord Jesus will be very careful to show his *religion at home*. It is at home that our real character shows itself; we may act a part when we are outside, but we are ourselves at home. There are some people who are very devout and regular at Church, but never carry their religion into the home circle. They keep all their Christianity for public occasions. Remember we must do *all* in the Name of the Lord Jesus. Some of the greatest trials meet us in our home life, some of the hardest battles with temptation are fought by the fire-side. The greatest of all conquerors is he who can conquer himself—

“Not in the clamour of the crowded street,
Not in the shouts and plaudits of the throng,
But in ourselves are triumph and defeat.”

The home life is the most important thing in our existence. It is the school, the college, the training ground, whose lessons last all through life. We may forget a good deal of what we learnt from books and teachers, but we never forget the teachings of our mother, or the examples, good or bad, which were put before us in our childhood. A child may grow up ignorant of many things which were taught him in the schoolroom, but he remembers what father and mother

said and did to his dying day. The last thing we forget is home.

“Each man's chimney is his golden milestone,
Is the central point from which he measures
Every distance
Through the gateways of the world around him ;
In his farthest wanderings still he sees it,
Hears the talking flame, the answering night-wind,
As he heard them
When he sat with those who were, but are not.”

My brethren, in your home life especially do all, say all, in the Name of the Lord Jesus. In the temple of Vesta, among the ancient Romans, the fire on the altar was never allowed to go out by day or night. Try to keep the fire of holiness burning upon the hearth, the altar, of home. Try to be good Christians in everyday home life, and you will be good Christians anywhere. Let all you do or say be consecrated to God's service. Husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, what sort of example do the children see in their home life? If the home is disorderly, godless, full of clamour and quarrelling, the picture of that home will be photographed on your child's memory, he will never forget it. A man who had led a bad life wished when he was dying that his influence could be buried with him, but it may not be. Our example will live when we are dead and forgotten. Try, then, to make your home life like that of the Lord Jesus. We cannot fancy Him saying a rough word, or making

a woman shrink in fear, or a little child cry with terror.
“ Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour,
and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice ;
and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving
one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath for-
given you.”

Sermon XVII.

THE GOLDEN RULE.

COLOSSIANS III. 17.

"Do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him."

IT has been truly said that "unless we perform Divine service in every willing act of our life, we never perform it at all." When you come to Church and take part in the prayers and responses, and sing the psalms and canticles and hymns, you say you are engaged in Divine Service, and so you are. But do not suppose that service ceases as soon as you step over the threshold of the Church porch. We cannot be always serving God in Church, but we ought to be always serving Him wherever we are. We may not be able to be singing psalms and hymns all day, nor would it be desirable ; but as someone says, "Each act of life may be like a psalm of praise ; and all we do in the home, the field, the counting-house, may be as truly to the glory of God as the most elaborate ceremonies of religion." A really good man will be good everywhere, one who loves the Lord Jesus Christ in

sincerity will be as near to Him in his daily labour as in his Sunday worship ; the praises of God will be in his mouth as he smites the iron on the anvil, or drives the plough along the furrow.

We are not merely to pay a formal visit to God in His Holy House on one day in the week, “in *all* thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths. Do *all* in the Name of the Lord Jesus.” We go to God in our hours of great sorrow and loss. When our house is left unto us desolate, when the clods fall heavily on the coffin lid, when the blinds are drawn down in the home of mourning, when someone very dear to us lies on his sick bed, then we cry out unto God, and get us to our Lord right humbly. Then we pray from the very depth of a sorrowing heart. But when the sun shines upon us, and all things smile ; when we prosper, and no shadow falls across our home, too often God is not in all our thoughts except for a brief hour or two in Church on Sunday. This is a fatal mistake. We must not make an idol of our God, and try to keep Him shut up in His Temple, the Church. Remember *we* are the Church, the living stones which build up the great Catholic Church of Christ, and wherever we are, our Head and Master, Jesus, is with us. We should live, and act, and speak as being always in the immediate presence of the Son of God. You would not speak irreverently, or profanely, or uncleanly in Church ; the most careless of us has some sort of reverence for God’s House. Well, every Christian household is

God's House, Bethel ; Jesus is with you in your home, your shop, your place of labour as much as in Church, His eyes are upon you all, the evil and the good, His ears are open to listen to what we say, therefore be as reverent and pure in your talk at home as in Church, "*do all* in the Name of the Lord Jesus." Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, God dwelleth in you, you cannot leave Him behind when the Church doors are locked ; therefore every act and word of your life should be a kind of Divine service.

"*Do all* in the Name of the Lord Jesus." Recognize Him as your King, your Ruler, your Guide in all things, whether great or small. You do this, perhaps, in great matters. In times of great affliction, or doubt, or anxiety you tell God about it. But do you take sweet counsel with Him about every little detail of your daily life ? Do you *fear* God as the Great and Terrible, or do you *trust* Him as the Friend of publicans and sinners, as the Helper of the helpless, as the gentle, loving Teacher Who carried the little children in His arms, and dried the tears of Mary ? I do not think we ever really love anyone of whom we are afraid. Learn to make a friend of Jesus. Tell Him all your affairs, not only your sins and failings, but your daily life and work. You pray to Him to forgive your faults, to grant you pardon, to save your soul alive, but that is not enough.

You have, some of you, to work hard for a living, and at times the burden seems very heavy. *Pray* about your work. Jesus knows what toil and labour

mean, He knows all about scanty means and scanty food. Pray about your work, and you will be stronger to do it, and you will labour with a light heart and a good conscience. The dullest day's work will be brightened if it be done in a spirit of prayer, you will feel that the Lord Jesus is with you, that His Hand is there to guide the plough, to swing the hammer, to shape the timbers. Your working-place will be holy ground, like that at Nazareth, because it has *prayer* there.

Some of you, my sisters, are cumbered with much serving, and you have much to try and trouble you. You find it very hard to be good-tempered, and patient, and cheerful when the children are troublesome, when the husband is unreasonable, when sickness comes into the family, or hard times threaten at the door. Yes, it is hard, but it is just under these circumstances that religion helps you. If you have no religion you must bear all these troubles alone, single-handed, and they will be too much for you. The burden will be greater than you can bear. But if you try to *do* all and *bear* all in the Name of the Lord Jesus things are different. If you commit your ways unto the Lord He will direct you, if you cast your burden upon Him He will help you to bear it. When things go wrong with you, when people try your temper and your patience, *pray* about the trouble, pray that you may have strength to give the soft answer, or to keep silence. Never let the children see you in a passion, it is bad for their

souls. The best piece of advice that I know for a newly wedded pair is never to be angry both at the same time. Yes, it is just in our daily commonplace life, with its small cares and sordid duties, that we most need the sanctifying power of Christianity. We must learn to do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus if we want to be good Christians every day—

“God help us through our common days,
The level stretches, white with dust,
When thought is tired, and hands upraise
Their burden feebly, since they must.
In days of slowly fretting care
Then most we need the power of prayer.”

“Do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus.” That means that we shall recognize Christ as our leader and guide in dark days as well as bright. It is very easy for anyone to trust in God as long as He gives him all that he desires. We are all ready to follow Jesus as long as the path is easy and pleasant. Anyone is ready to be a child of God as long as God lets him do nothing but gather flowers. Anyone would be a disciple of Christ if he might keep away from the cross of persecution or self-denial. Anyone can praise God while blessings are showered upon him. But the test of our Christianity is, do we receive the thorns from the Hands of Jesus, and thank Him for them as we thanked Him for the roses? Do we praise God in the fires of trouble and loss and bereavement as we did in the days of prosperity? Do we thank God for the

rough, stony path of self-sacrifice, for Gethsemane, for Calvary, as well as for the paths of pleasantness and peace? We thank God for what He has given us, do we thank Him also for what He has denied us, or taken away from us? Ah, brethren, it is so easy to follow Christ when He leads us on our favourite road, but that is not always the best road for us by any means. He takes us along the dark way that we may ask for a light, the light of the Holy Spirit, to guide us. If we were always out in the bright sunshine we should never think about the light. He takes us into rough, steep ways that we may learn to cling fast to His Hand; if the road of life were always smooth and easy we should forget God's Hand. Some of us would never look up to Heaven if the angel of sorrow did not turn aside our eyes from the pleasant things of earth, and show us that the upward steps to Heaven are often wet with tears.

If we are to do all in the Name of Jesus, we must expect to *suffer* in His Name. If we have never known sorrow we have never come very close to the Man of Sorrows. If we have no marks of the nails upon us we have stood a long way off from Calvary and its Cross. During the American war a General required someone to do a desperate service which meant almost certain death. He looked at the soldiers near him, and said to a youth whose courage he had noticed, "Are you willing to die for your country?" "Yes, General," was the prompt answer, "I entered the service for that

purpose." Brethren, when we are called upon to do a hard thing, when the Lord asks us if we are willing to give up something very dear to us for His sake, if we are ready to face suffering, loss, insult, perhaps death itself, for His sake and the Gospel's, let us remember our Baptism, and answer, "I entered the service for that purpose." They tell us that the Mexicans say to a new-born babe, "Child, thou art come into the world to suffer, endure, and hold thy peace." When Doctor Arnold, the great schoolmaster, was dying, he thanked God for sending him pain, which he had scarcely known in life, knowing it must be good for him. We cannot expect to follow closely in the footsteps of Jesus without wounding our feet, or wearing the thorns for our crown.

Lastly, S. Paul not only bids us do all in the Name of Jesus, but to do it "giving thanks unto God and the Father by Him." The man who sings at his work will get through the day's task far better than the discontented man. He who when the morning comes thanks God and takes courage, will be strong enough for any task. Some people are always counting up their troubles, always saying—I am sorry, I am disappointed, I am so full of trouble. Rather let us learn to say—I am so *thankful*. Be cheerful in your religion. It is the happiest of all things to be able to live and do all things in the Name of the Lord Jesus. Some people's religion is all gloom and misery. They seem to think it sinful to laugh and sing. The God of these people is not the true God, they have put a false picture of

Him before their eyes, and they worship their idol instead of the God of love. They fancy that the Lord is a stern and hard taskmaster waiting to find His servants tripping, and rejoicing to punish them. They regard God as being cruel and unforgiving, and they become so themselves. They know nothing of mercy, nothing of love. Beware of this false teaching. If your religion does not make you happy, does not make you sing merrily unto the Lord, and make a cheerful noise to the God of Jacob, it is not worth having. No religion is true which has not a song in it, and which does not show itself in praises and thanksgivings.

If we want to win others to Christ, and that is the plain duty of every Christian, we must teach the world that our religion makes us *happy*. If we show people a sad face and a gloomy temper, and a sour manner, and tell them that these represent religion, they will have none of it, and quite rightly. If we would gain the careless and indifferent let us show them how happy our faith makes us. Let us show them that the man who does his work in a Christian spirit, in the Name of the Lord Jesus, does it twice as well as anyone else. Let us show them that he who suffers and bears pain in the Name of the Lord Jesus is twice as patient as another, and that he can thank God and praise God, though his eyes may be wet with tears. Let us show them that the Master in Whose Name we live, and work, and do all that we have to do, is Jesus, the loving, the patient, the merciful; the Friend of


sinners, the Helper of the weak and helpless, One Who seeks for the lost sheep and bears it home rejoicing, One Who rejoices over one sinner that repents. May God the Holy Spirit give us grace to "do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him."

Sermon XVIII.

WHAT SHALL WE SOW ?

GALATIANS VI. 7.

"Be not deceived ; God is not mocked : for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

N these days of agricultural depression a very serious question for the farmer is—What shall we sow? What shall we sow to obtain the best and most lucrative crop? But this is not a question for farmers only. In one sense every Christian should ask himself—What shall we sow? The question is not, shall we sow, or shall we not sow. We are all sowing something every day, we cannot help it. Our acts, our words, our examples are all seeds sown in the lives of those around us. No man liveth unto himself, we are all sowers. Our lives and characters to-day are the result of seed sown in the past. The future of our children and our neighbours depends upon what sort of seed we are sowing now.

Here, then, are two serious things for us to think about. First, we are all sowers. Secondly, what shall we sow? We are all sowers, and the seed we sow, our

acts and words and examples, are for eternity. It is impossible to say how far hence the harvest of our sowing to-day may come for us and for others. When they opened one of the Pyramids, the vast tomb of the Pharaohs, they found there some grains of wheat. They had lain there perhaps since the days of Joseph in Egypt, but after all those long ages they were brought to light, and sown in the earth, and they grew and brought forth fruit. In those same Egyptian tombs was discovered a lily bulb lying in the dead hand of a princess who had lived ages ago. And that seed which had been with the dead so long was itself alive, and grew and blossomed into a sweet flower. The consequences of our actions, the harvest of the seed we sow, may come long hence, after we are dead and gone, perhaps, but come they surely will. If we have tried to lead godly and Christian lives, lives of useful work for man done in the Name of God, we shall be like the wheat which had its harvest after long years. We shall have made some people the better for our sowing.

The influence of a good, pure woman will live after her. She is like that lily bulb, she may sink into her grave, but her example, her influence will live, and make others good—

"Only the actions of the great
Smell sweet, and blossom in the dust."

Some of you had a good mother, who guided your childish feet along the narrow way which leads to

eternal life. That mother's body is lying in the Churchyard, but the seed she sowed in your hearts, the lessons she taught you, the example she set you, these are not buried with her. The best men and women amongst us owe their characters to the schooling of a good mother, there is no earthly sower of seed like her. Some of us may be careless and thoughtless now, too much occupied with the world and its cares and pleasures, but if we had a good mother the seed of her teaching is in us still, and is bringing forth fruit in our habits and way of life. The seed of influence never dies ; we may have sinned against our God and against our mother, but we cannot forget her lessons.

Ah, sons and daughters, as you walk past your mother's grave in the Churchyard do you not recall her love, her gentle example ; do you not seem to hear her voice crying to you—My child, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not ? My child, forsake not the Church of thy fathers, and the Altar of thy crucified Lord ? Do you not remember how she taught you the things that concern your peace, how she warned you to be faithful to your Church and her Sacraments, how she prayed for you daily ? Ah, the seed which she sowed is not lost ; some of you are saying to yourselves now—I wish I were what my dead mother wanted me to be. Some memories of better, purer days are coming back to you, the good seed is not lost. During the war in America a young man was seriously wounded, and his mother travelled many long

miles to see him in the hospital. When she arrived she was told that her son was sleeping, and the slightest shock might be fatal to him. She was allowed however to look at the wounded man, and seeing the sweat of agony on his brow she laid her hand upon it. Instead of being startled, or injured by the touch, the soldier murmured gently, "It's mother's hand."

My brethren, many a one has been saved from some awful temptation, and held back from some deadly sin, by the influence of a good mother, and he has felt in that hour of danger—It's mother's voice, it's mother's hand. When the first English colonists went to America, and settled in a valley called the Wish-ton Wish, a daughter was stolen from her parents by the Indians when only a little child. She was wept for as lost, and for many years she lived among savages, and became as fierce and cruel as they against the pale-faces. At length she was taken captive and brought home, but she did not recognize her parents. Then her mother began to sing one of the old songs of childhood, and the girl started, and her eyes filled with tears, and the past began to come back to her. Oh, believe me, the influence of a good mother never dies.

We are all sowers, and the seed we sow, the influence we exert, may have very far-reaching effects. The seeds of some trees have as it were wings, and the wind carries them from the parent tree to some far distant spot where they drop into the earth and grow. Other seeds are carried by birds into the most unlikely

places, and a sweet flower blossoms in the midst of dirt and vice and misery. When Captain Cook first visited the South Sea islands he would scatter seed corn upon the ground. The people saw the act, but understood it not, but long after, when Captain Cook had died at the hand of the natives, the fields were standing thick with corn. It is the same with our acts and words and examples. They reach far. The good son of good parents emigrates to the other side of the world; but though he has changed his country he has not changed his character, and his example leads others in the colony to a good life. The man who prayed in England prays in New Zealand, and teaches others to pray. The bad man sows his evil seed also with far-reaching consequences. He who was a disgrace and a plague spot to his parish at home goes away to sea, or emigrates. But he carries the bad seed with him, and he continues to sow it. He makes others as bad as himself. We none of us can tell how far the effects of what we do or say may reach. The man who sowed thistle seed in Australia because he wanted to see the familiar plant of home, did not know that he was introducing a weed which would in time ruin thousands of acres. The man who lets his children see him drunken, or hear him swear, does not know that in the future those children will follow in his steps, and be drunkards and swearers also. He sowed the seed, and the seed will grow. Someone tells a bad story, and puts an impure thought into the mind of an innocent girl. The

time comes when he will have to reap his harvest. He may on earth be brought face to face with a degraded ruined woman, who will say to him—I am the harvest of the seed you sowed. And even if he is never called to account here, the harvest will come hereafter, “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

Only lately some people pitched their camp near some water springs in Kent, and the water became poisoned. In time the camp was broken up, and the people passed on their way, but the poison remained, and the water flowing down to the neighbouring town infected hundreds of people with typhoid fever. So true is it that the evil which we do lives after us, after we have left the scene of our acts, or left the world altogether, the seed remains and grows. As the poisoned stream carries the seed of disease to the village and the town, as the seed of some noxious weed is blown far and wide by the wind, and floated over miles of ocean to other lands, so the things we do, and the words we say, and the habits we indulge in, are as seed sown broadcast, and produce a harvest, good or bad, after many days. There are persons now suffering for the sins of their ancestors; they sowed the seed of drunkenness, of uncleanness, of madness, of unbelief, and their descendants are reaping the black harvest to-day.

“It is the law of life that retribution

Shall follow wrong;

It never fails, although the execution

May tarry long.”

“Be not deceived ; God is not mocked ; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” Someone may answer me and say—I have done many wrong things in my time, I have sown much bad seed according to your teaching, but I have never suffered for it. Perhaps not *as yet*. You have had the sowing, but you have not yet seen the harvest. The man who is leading a bad life in youth is only in his seed time, his sowing time ; but let him wait till old age creeps upon him, and he will begin to reap his harvest, sickness, remorse, poverty, failure alike of mind and body. We never think of the harvest when we are sowing the bad seed. Many of us do not live to see the harvest of our sowing here, good or bad. We shall gather it in the world to come. When you read a story in a magazine you see written at the end of the chapter, *to be continued* ; so is it with our life’s story, the page ends, the chapter closes abruptly on our death-bed, but the story is not concluded, it will be continued in the next world, and then the harvest will come.

We have seen so far that we are all sowers, now let us ask the serious question—What shall we sow? The seed, remember, is our life and conduct, our example ; the field is the place we live in and the people we meet with. What shall we sow? What shall we live for, what shall be the chief aim and object of our life? Shall it be *money*? No slave works so hard as the slave of gold. There are people now starving and freezing up in the far north land, and

suffering unheard of hardship, on the chance of finding a little gold dust by-and-bye. If all your sowing, all your life, is to make money, and even if you succeed, which few do, what will you do with your harvest? There it lies all golden yellow about you, and you lie there on your dying bed, and you know that you cannot carry one grain of it with you for your harvest home. What shall we sow? Shall it be *pleasure and self-indulgence*? You will have a pretty flower to look at for a little time, but it will soon fade away, and you will have nothing to show but withered leaves. What shall we sow? Shall it be *dissipation and extravagance*? My brethren, remember the harvest; you are sowing sharp thorns and thistles which you must gather with torn and bleeding hands one day. A wise man considers the harvest when he sows his seed. He does not sow a crop which will yield him nothing, which will not last or profit. He does not sow any seed which may come to hand, and expect a good harvest from it. He goes about and carefully examines various kinds of seed that he may get the best.

What shall we sow? Let us sow the *best seed*, that will not only give us a harvest of peace here, but joy eternal hereafter. "He that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." If we sow unto the world, the world alone will yield us a harvest, and it has to be gathered with weary hands and aching brow, and is often not worth the having. Those who live and labour only for the things of earth are like the

fabled giant whom the Cornish legends tell us is condemned to stand on the seashore, and twist ropes of sand. As fast as the work is done it falls to pieces again. If our life is all of the earth earthy, we are sowing in the sand, labouring for that which will bring us no good. What shall we sow? Let us sow love and reverence for God and His Commandments. "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." Thou shalt dwell in the good land of God's Holy Church, and verily thou shalt be fed. The hungry, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, shall be filled with good things, with the holy food of the Altar, they shall eat of the fruit of the Tree of Life, and live for evermore. Sow the seed of holiness, the seed of a pure life, the seed of a good example, and others shall reap with you where you have sown, here shall you gather that peace which the world cannot give, and hereafter such good things as pass man's understanding.

Sermon XIX.

DAY BY DAY RELIGION.

NEHEMIAH VIII. 18.

"Day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God."



THE Jews had returned from captivity, and were rebuilding the ruins of Jerusalem under Ezra and Nehemiah. And notice that this building was done in a very different way from that in which most of our work is done in these days; it was done in a truly *religious* spirit. Those ruined walls were not only raised with trowel and pick and shovel, but with prayer and praise and thanksgiving. I would that our working-men and our traders and men of commerce would likewise do their business in a religious spirit. We should not have so many badly-built houses, and careless workmanship, and adulterated goods, if men could touch their work with clean hands, and dare to pray over it. One part of the religious spirit in which these Jews did their repairs was shown in celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles, so long neglected. Once more the people brought branches of olive and palm

and pine and myrtle, and made booths, and dwelt in them, to remind themselves of the days when they had no fixed home, and wandered in the wilderness out of the way.

My brethren, I think we ought to be keeping a Feast of Tabernacles all our life long. We ought so to live as to be daily reminded that here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come. When we hear of men building big houses, and calling the lands after their own names, making provision for years to come, and talking as though their houses were to continue for ever, we need to remind them how short our time is, how short *their* time is, "so soon passeth it away, and we are gone." Oh, we all need to keep our Feast of Tabernacles day by day, and to remember that every night we are "pitching our moving tent a day's march nearer home." Yes, all through this earthly life we should feel—I am keeping my Feast of Tabernacles now, but one day I shall dwell in the golden Jerusalem on high, one day I shall enter the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, and I shall dwell in the House of the Lord for ever.

Another proof of the religious spirit in which the Jews lived and worked was that Ezra read to them from the first day unto the last day in the book of the law of God. God's Word was their guide throughout. They did all they had to do in a religious spirit. They did not say, as so many people do in these days, religion is one thing, and business is another. They put the

two together. They sanctified their work by prayer and by the study of God's law. Whatever their hand found to do, they did it as unto the Lord. The great mistake which so many of us make now is that we shut our religion out of our place of business and our workshop for six days in the week, and take it out with our Sunday clothes on one day. "Day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God." That should be the rule for every servant of Jesus Christ. I do not mean that we should be reading our Bible all day long, and doing nothing else; but I do mean that we should make God's Will the rule of our daily life, and in *all* things endeavour to walk in the way of His commandments. It will not do for us merely to listen to those Commandments on Sunday, we must try to obey them day by day, from the first day unto the last day. The Bible must not be a Sunday book, which we neglect all the rest of the week; its teachings, and those of the Holy Church, should form our rule of life, day by day, from the first day unto the last day.

We need *a day by day religion*, a religion for *every* day. Some people's religion comes and goes by fits and starts. For a time they have a hot fit, they flock to Church, they are present at the Altar, they are devout in prayer and Bible reading, they are eager to do some good work. But the fit passes, and their place knows them no more. In America there are certain oil springs, which break out in the land, and yield thousands of

gallons of oil daily, till the owners become rich beyond imagination. Then the springs suddenly dry up, and he who is a millionaire to-day may be a beggar to-morrow. Our religion must not be like that. It must be a spring which rises and flows day by day, from the first day unto the last day, or we shall be poor indeed, naked, hungry, without God in the world. It has been truly said that "we must have a seven days' religion, or none at all." We do not want a religion which shines out suddenly like a flash of lightning, and then disappears, leaving all things darker than ever; it must be like the steady, calm light of the stars, which shine always.

When a man is presented to the Queen at Court, he puts on a particular kind of suit, Court dress, and when the parade is over he lays aside the Court dress, and may never use it again. We, as members of the Holy Church, are always in the presence of our Sovereign; there is no moment of our lives when we are out of sight of Jesus Christ, our King. Therefore we must never lay aside our Court dress, which is the white robe of holiness given us in our Baptism. As we are ever in the presence of our Lord, so we must always behave ourselves as those who stand before the King. Our religion is not something to be put on and off once a week, it must be the clothing of everyday life, the clothing of our working hours as well as of our worship hours. The two mean very much the same thing.

We call a Church a *place of worship*, and so it is; but

so is a godly home, so is a godly workshop, so is any place where men and women serve God faithfully, and do all to His glory. If I were to ask you your business in life, one would say he is a landowner, another a farmer, another an artisan, another a labourer, or a shop-keeper. But the business of life ought to be the same in every case, to glorify God in our life and works. So many people make the common mistake of thinking they are too busy to think and talk of religion on six days of the week, they keep all their religion for Sunday. That very business, that work which you are trying to do thoroughly, is a part, a great part, of religion. If you are doing it honestly, truly, as well as ever you can; if you remember that you are in God's presence always, if you consecrate your work by prayer, your place of labour may be as sacred as a Cathedral. God will not recognize people who are only devout on one day in the seven. God will not believe in those who put away all their religion and pious thoughts when they put on their working clothes.

A true Christian will remember that he is a Christian *always*, "day by day, from the first day unto the last day." There are people who are very reverent and gentle in manner when present in Church, because they believe that God is present there, and they are right. But these people often forget when they are violent, angry, passionate at home, or in their place of work, that God is present there also. Try to remember, dear brethren, that wherever your place in the world may

be, it is meant to be holy ground, because the Lord is there ; try to realize that you are the servants of Christ wherever you may be, in lofty place or lowly, and that you are living under His eye. People talk sometimes about "finding Christ" ; He does not need any finding, He is not very far from any one of us. He is Emmanuel, God *with* us. He is with you, O labourer, if you are trying to lead a godly life, as you work in field or garden. He is with you, O wife and mother, as you go about your domestic concerns, if only you have prayed about them. Do not wait till Church time on Sunday to find Jesus. Christ and the holy angels are in your poor kitchen, if your home is a godly home, the ladder is set up between Heaven and earth in every religious household, and the angels of God are there ascending and descending upon it.

"Day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God." "From the first day," that means that we should begin *our life with God*, begin early in our first days to serve the Lord. You who are young, do not fall into the mistake of thinking religion is only meant as a crutch for the old and feeble. What is the actual beginning of our real life ? Our Baptism, when we are made God's children, Christ's soldiers and servants *unto our life's end*. That is from the first day unto the last day. I knew a godly old woman in my parish who made a point of coming to Church to return thanks on her birthday, as she had called it, that is the day of her Baptism. The day

when we are born again of water and the Holy Spirit is our true birthday, the birthday of our soul. As we were dedicated to God in our earliest days, so we must begin to serve Him, to study His Will, from the first day unto the last day. Do not give your first and best days to the service of pleasure, or self, or sin. Do not expect God to receive you with favour when you have spent the greater part of your life in serving the world, and the flesh, and the devil; *begin with God*. Begin as you mean to go on. Make God's Word and God's Church the rule and guide of all you do, "day by day, from the first day unto the last day."

I wonder how many of you people read your Bible. There is more hypocrisy about that matter, perhaps, than about any other. We find people who say what a glorious thing it is for England to have the Bible within reach of the poorest, and in the mother tongue, but they seldom or never read it. My brethren, that dust upon your Bible will witness against you some day. There is no book, I believe, more talked about in England to-day, and less read, than the Bible. I say to you—Make God's law, the law of the Church, the law of the Bible, the law of religion, your guide day by day. "The fruit of the Spirit is *goodness*." And this goodness must appear in our daily life, in all we do and say, in our dealings with our fellow-men. The people who praise God in Church on Sunday must praise Him, though in a different way, in the market, the farm, the shop, on Monday. If you are

Christians at all you must be *always* Christians, "day by day, from the first day unto the last day." You will not serve God a little on one day, and the world a great deal on the other six. You will remember Whose servant you are, Whose mark you bear, under all circumstances and in all places. You cannot do away with the sign of the Cross, it is fixed upon you for your salvation or your ruin. Try to do all you have to do in the fear of God, as being under the Master's eye. Remember in the darkest night as in the brightest day, "Thou, God, seest me." We hear a man say sometimes that he is going to take a day off work. But we must never take a day off God's service, never take a holiday from duty, the rule is—"Day by day, from the first day unto the last day."

Day by day. I think that teaches us to *begin every day with God*. Someone says very wisely, "See not the face of man till thou hast seen the face of God." I am fully persuaded that the sins and scandals and troubles of our parishes proceed from one cause, people do not pray enough. Pray to God and put on the garment of religion when you rise, as naturally as you put on your clothes. Begin the day with God. Your mouth will be cleaner, and purer, and sweeter all the day, for having used it first in prayer. Next, you go forth to your work and to your labour until the evening; you take the hammer, or the plough, or the pen, or the paint-brush, the tools of your work, with you. Take something else, take your religion with you. Do not

leave it at home, but have it with you in the field or shop, in office or counting-house. In the course of your day's work you will be certain to meet with temptations ; people will vex you, irritate your temper, try your patience. You will be tempted to speak angrily and unadvisedly with your lips. If you have your religion with you it will remind you what David did—" I will keep my mouth as it were with a bridle, while the ungodly is in my sight."

Day by day. You will have your times of amusement and recreation sometimes. As you take your religion with you during work, take it with you when you play. Many a harmless, innocent holiday has ended in the ruin of a soul, because God's law was forgotten.

Day by day. One day trouble will come to you, as it does to all. The sudden message, the unexpected letter, tells us that the blow has fallen. Sickness and death have come to our home, commercial failure has swallowed up our hard-earned money, a great anxiety has been sent to us. If we have no religion with us, no trust in God, the blow strikes us down. We are helpless, hopeless, prostrate. But the man whose study is the law of God, day by day, knows what to do with his trouble. He takes the discomfiting letter, or disquieting telegram, and spreads it before the Lord. Misfortune strikes the godless man to the earth, it only brings the righteous man to his knees. Sorrow drives the careless to despair, it leads the earnest closer to God. My brethren, begin your life, begin each day, with God.

Go on with God day by day in your work, your home life, your pleasures, your cares, your sorrows. "Day by day, from the first day unto the last day."

The last day! That must come to all sooner or later. It may come suddenly in the midst of our work and labour, or gradually, after we have lain long upon a sick bed, but come it surely will. The last piece of work here will have been finished, and it is time to lay aside the tools, and to go home. Then if we have made God's law our study day by day, from the first day unto the last day, death will have no terrors for us. The long day's work is over, we are putting forth on the great ocean which shall bear us to the haven where we would be, and we can say—

"Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark,
And may there be no sadness of farewell
When I embark.

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have cross'd the bar."

Sermon XX.

THE PILGRIM ROAD.

PSALM CXIX. 33.

"Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end."

IN the early days of England, long ago, it was the custom for people to make a pilgrimage to the shrine of S. Thomas à Becket, who lies buried in Canterbury Cathedral. They travelled on a road made as straight as possible across Kent, and to this day the course of the Pilgrim Road can be traced. These pilgrims travelled in company for the sake of help and protection from the dangers of the way; they did not seek out some road of their own devising, but kept to the pilgrim path, and one day they came in sight of the City of Canterbury and the towers of its Cathedral, and knew that their pilgrimage was ended. We, my brethren, are all on a pilgrimage from this world to the next. We seek a city, even Jerusalem above, Jerusalem the golden, with milk and honey blest. We go not to worship at the grave of a dead saint, but to stand among a great multitude which

no man can number, of all nations and languages, and to keep the Festival of All Saints for ever.

We are God's pilgrims journeying to Paradise, and we must keep on *the pilgrim road*. We are not free to choose our own path. People will tell us that all roads lead to Heaven. It is not so. Sometimes, in the country, we come to a place where three roads meet. In olden days it was a common thing to see a wayside cross set up where now the finger-post stands, and the place is even now called the cross, or crossing. When we start on our pilgrimage as Christ's servants we shall come to the parting of the ways, the place where three roads meet. There is *God's way*, and *the world's way*, and *our own way*. We have to make our choice. If we choose God's way, the pilgrim road, we shall come to a Cross; as it has been said, "There is no way to Heaven but by the weeping Cross." We shall shed tears of repentance at the Cross, that we may go on our way rejoicing, and with God's praises on our lips. And learn that we cannot find that way for ourselves. Israel tried to choose their own path to the Promised Land, and they lost themselves. "They wandered in the wilderness out of the way." A man may carve out a road for himself to fame, or fortune, or prosperity, but he cannot make a way to holiness. He may cut out steps in the steep rock of difficulty, and make a ladder up to success, but he cannot fashion a ladder which will reach to Heaven. A man may have a private road to his own home, but not to the many mansions

of his heavenly Father. He must be *taught* the way of God's Commandments by God Himself. Our Lord Jesus Christ says, "I am the way, the truth, and the light; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me."

David's great longing and desire, as set forth in the hundred and nineteenth Psalm, was to be taught God's way, and to have strength to walk in it. "Teach me the way of Thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep Thy law, I shall keep it with my whole heart. Make me to go in the path of Thy Commandments; for therein is my desire." This is the wish of David's heart, to walk with God along the way of holiness. Such should be the desire of every true son of God. Too many people do not fear sin, but the *punishment* of sin. They think about the end of the journey, and want to be safe in the hour of death and the day of judgment, but they do not trouble about the life they live here in this world. They want to go to Heaven finally, but they are not particular what road they travel on. The great desire of so many of us is to be saved; whereas the first wish of their heart should be to live holy lives. The common prayer is—Forgive me my sins; whereas we ought to pray oftener—Keep me from sinning; "teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end." The average man says—I want to escape punishment, I want to inherit the promises, I want to win the crown of everlasting life. The true Christian says—I want to be kept from sin. I want to walk

before the Lord in the land of the living. I do not ask for rewards, I would seek first the Kingdom of Heaven and its righteousness.

When the Canterbury pilgrims went on their journey they saw many other roads and paths, but they did not leave the pilgrim road. They did not say that all roads led to Canterbury, and that it mattered not which way they travelled. Some of the paths may have seemed very tempting, easier and pleasanter than this pilgrim road, but they never turned aside. So with us, as we go on our pilgrimage to the Heavenly Jerusalem. We shall see many other roads which tempt us. There is the broad way of the world, trodden by great crowds of people; there is wealth there, and rank, and fashion; it is a very broad road, and there is room for all. But we must not turn aside from the narrow pilgrim path, for the way of the world is not God's way.

Then there is *our own way*, the way of self-pleasing. It is far pleasanter in our eyes than the narrow pilgrim path. It is an easy road, and a soft one to travel on. But whither does it lead? It is like one of those tracks on Dartmoor, which takes the traveller across green paths, to be swallowed up in the treacherous, fatal bog. My brethren, if we would reach our journey's end in safety we must keep to the pilgrim path, we must walk in the way of God's Commandments.

"Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes." God must be our teacher and guide. All the wisest scholars on earth cannot make us holy. They can teach our

brains, but not our hearts. An earthly teacher might frighten us into fearing the punishment of sin, as a harsh schoolmaster can make his pupils tremble before him, but it is God alone Who can make us fear *sin*, and long after holiness. Which do you desire—to walk in your own way, and yet be saved at last; or to walk in the way of God's laws, and to keep it unto the end? Which is it, a selfish desire to save your soul, or a loving wish to lead a holy life?

“Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes.” If you were a stranger in a strange land, and knew not the way, you would not be foolish enough to take a road of your own choosing; you would ask your way; you would, if possible, procure a map, and go on your journey map in hand. So in the pilgrimage which we are making from this world to the next, we must not choose our own path, but ask God, the Holy Spirit, in all things to direct our hearts and minds in the ways of His laws and the works of His Commandments. We shall make God's Holy Word and the lessons of His Holy Church our map, and we shall travel by that, as closely as the mariner steers his course by the compass. Our daily prayer will be—O that my ways were made so direct that I might keep Thy statutes. We can say with the Prophet, “O Lord, I know that the ways of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.” Therefore we shall ask God to show us the way of His statutes, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Notice again, that after God has taught us the way of holiness, there is something for us to do. It is of no use to know a road if we do not travel on it. It is useless to understand all about God's laws if we do not keep them. David says, "Give me understanding, and I shall keep Thy law ; yea, I shall keep it with my whole heart." God wants whole-hearted people, not half-hearted. A saint of old says that many people will keep the law in boxes and chests, but that the heart is a better storehouse for it. If we have God's law in our hearts our feet are sure to go in the right path. It is the half-hearted people who fail to keep in the pilgrim road of God's law. I have heard of a man, of whom it was said that he was a man of business daily from ten to four, and a Churchman in his leisure moments. There is the fatal mistake, if we are Churchmen we shall act as Christ's servants always, we shall keep in the right road at all times. Some people keep their Bible in a glass case, or locked up in a drawer. That will not help them. If we would know God's law, we must study it, we must have it written in our hearts as well as in God's Book. We shall regulate all we do by the rule of our Master, Jesus, we shall walk in the pathway of His Commandments always, remembering that we serve the Lord Christ, that we are always and everywhere Churchmen.

"Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes." What sort of way is it? Not an easy way to travel on at all times. We are pilgrims, remember, not a mere party

of pleasure. It is an uphill road, for it leads on high, above all that is low and sordid and base. The way of holiness, of duty, of God's Commandments, is not a flowery path where we may wander at ease with slippered feet, but one which is often rough and stony, and where we climb with feet that ache and bleed. It is a road in which we must not overload ourselves with worldly luggage. The man who is bowed down with the weight of his money, or his work, or his domestic concerns, will make but a poor traveller on the pilgrim road. Many a one is so weighted down by worldly gear that he can make no progress in the upward way of God's law. As says the poet—

“If thou art rich, thou'rt poor;
Like the poor ass whose back with ingots bound,
Thou bear'st thy heavy burden but a journey,
And death unloadeth thee.”

Then the pilgrim way *has many dangers and difficulties in it*. No one ever passed to the journey's end without a struggle, any more than Israel could gain the Promised Land without encountering their enemies. Every true man who tries to walk in the way of God's Commandments will *have to fight and to suffer sometimes*. For David there was the lion and the bear and the giant. For Shadrach and his brethren there was the fiery furnace, for Daniel the lion's den. There are temptations in our path strong as giants, fierce as lions, and we must be prepared to fight. And we must be *prepared to suffer*. There are parts of the road

which are wet with tears, tears shed over our sins and failures. There are parts of the road where our broken resolutions lie thick as the leaves on an autumn path.

But the road also is *full of encouragement and comfort*. We know, for one thing, that it is the *right road*. We know also that we are not alone, but journeying in a goodly company. The way is all trodden and marked by footprints. There are the footmarks of One Who trod the path before us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps. So Jesus is with us on our pilgrimage. And there, too, are the footprints of aged saints, like S. Paul, and young children, like S. Pancras, old men and maidens, young men and children, are with us on the road. We have our battle to fight, our journey to make, but we do not fight alone, nor travel alone. God will not remove our enemies out of our path, or make the hill less steep, but He *will* give us strength to conquer if we fight bravely, He will make a way for us through the most stony places.

We have, too, *sweet memories of friends* who have left us, to cheer and comfort us on our pilgrimage. Those who have reached their journey's end before us are not lost; their love, their example still stay with us. In the hour of danger, of trial, of temptation, we seem to hear the voices of our dear ones speaking to us from beyond the veil.

"And oft when alone, and oft in the throng,
Or when evil allures us, and sin draweth nigh,
A whisper comes softly, 'Nay, do not the wrong,'
And we feel that our weakness is pitied on high."

Then, lastly, *how shall we journey along the pilgrim road?* Very *humbly*, knowing how weak we are, and how liable our feet are to stumble and stray. Very *hopefully*, because we can trust God's promises to the uttermost, and we know that our eyes shall see the city which hath foundations one day. Very *joyfully*, because though we must weep sometimes, the life of a Christian is the happiest of all lives. My brethren, if you are journeying along the way of God's Commandments, be joyful. Sing, rejoice, and give thanks. Do not be like those who are performing funeral marches to the grave. Go on your way rejoicing, from strength to strength, till you all appear in Sion. "Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end." All depends on being *steadfast*. Many start on the right road, but lose themselves afterwards. "He that endureth unto the end the same shall be saved." Go on, dear brethren, in the way of holiness until the end be, then shall your death be a blessed and a happy close to your journey, and you shall know that the angels are around you, as the land birds fly around the vessel, and tell the tired mariner that his voyage is over.

Sermon XXI.

SHALLOW CHRISTIANS.

S. MATTHEW XIII. 5.

"Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth."



HENEVER a service is held in Church the parable of the sower is repeated. In every congregation we find the good seed of God's Word falling upon four kinds of soil, four classes of hearers. There is the seed by the wayside, the careless hearer, who takes no heed. There is the seed on the rocky ground, the shallow hearer ; there is the seed among the thorns, the worldly hearer ; and there is the seed on the good ground. Notice that the *seed* is the *same*, it is the *soil* that is different. It is the fashion now to criticize and find fault with the preacher, and to say that his sermon has not done us any good, or helped us in any way. But although every preacher, every sower, cannot be equally gifted and clever, he sows the *same seed*, God's Word. If the seed does not grow and produce a harvest it is not the sower's fault, nor the seed's fault, the fault is in the soil. Notice also that this teaching of ours is not intended for the

outsider, for the man who seldom or never comes to Church, who never troubles to read or to hear God's Word. These people are like the waste, uncultivated land of the desert, there is no question of sowing seed for them. The teaching of the parable is for us who profess and call ourselves Christians and Churchmen, who come regularly week after week to God's House, who listen to the message of the Gospel, who take part in the service. The seed is being sown in us regularly and constantly, yet there are some among us who have never brought forth any fruit unto righteousness; there is nothing to show for all the seed sown, the sermons preached, the Gospels and Epistles and Lessons read, the instructions and warnings given. You see, this is a serious matter for us who are Church-goers, and who perhaps pride ourselves upon being so. We must ask ourselves the solemn question—To which class do I belong, what kind of soil am I? Am I like the trodden wayside, the indifferent, uninterested hearer, from whom the devil takes the good seed at once? Or am I the shallow hearer, like the thin soil over the hard rock, where the seed grows and does not last? Or am I the thorny ground, the hearer who lets the cares and pleasures and occupations of the world smother his religion? Or am I the good ground, the hearer whose heart is prepared and ready, who not only hears with his ears, and believes in his heart, but tries to act out his faith in his life?

All four classes of hearers are present here now. I

am going only to speak of one class, the *shallow hearer*. "Some seeds fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth." That is the kind of soil which you find very often on the borders of Dartmoor. In the middle of the field is a great solid mass of granite rock, and a slight covering of shallow earth over it. Let us see the kind of people who are meant by the rocky ground. Their great characteristic is that they are shallow outside, and very hard inside. They have no depth of religious character. They are not without religion by any means. They come to Church most times in the year; "they hear the Word, and anon with joy receive it." These people are excellent hearers. They pay great attention to the sermon; they cry over it sometimes, it makes them feel very serious and earnest for the time being. They go home, perhaps, and turn down a leaf of their Bible, and put a pencil mark against the text. Yes, they are excellent hearers. They receive the Word, that is more than merely hearing it. They accept it, and believe in it as being true. They do not go away and find fault with the doctrine, they receive it as being God's truth. And not only do they receive it, but they do so at once, and with joy.

"He that receiveth the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it." These are the people who tell us that they love their Church, that they have been Church-goers all their lives; they tell us that they like to hear our sermons. They are really fond of religion after a

fashion, and say that it makes them happy. They listen to a sermon on faith, and they think it is so simple to only believe; and they feel that they believe, and so they are safe, and they are happy. They hear a sermon or a lesson on the pitifulness and love of Jesus; they weep over the Prodigal Son and the Lost Sheep; they say Jesus is so merciful and kind to sinners, and so they are quite happy. But, my brethren, it is very easy to deceive ourselves. We may feel quite happy because we have never looked inside ourselves, and seen our sins. A man who does not feel any pain is quite happy, but if he could see inside himself, and know that his heart was mortally diseased, he would feel differently. A patient under chloroform is happy because he knows nothing about suffering, though he may die in that sleep. A man who goes to sleep in a lime kiln is happy, and dies quickly and comfortably in the pleasant fatal warmth. I saw a man once in a Mission who was living in open and shameful sin, yet he used to tell everyone that he was saved and was very happy. These people who receive the seed with joy are so shallow that the Word of God takes no firm root in them, it does not go down deep enough. They take a bit of the Gospel, and pin their whole faith to that. They are happy because they think they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. But they forget that the Lord Jesus Christ said, "If ye love Me, keep My Commandments." They talk much about *believing*, but nothing about *obeying*. They take hold of such a

text as—"Whomsoever cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out," and they feel happy. But they do not stop to ask *how* they are to come to Christ. They neglect the Sacraments, which are the sure ways of coming to Him. They are ready to receive the welcome of the Prodigal, and the best robe, and the fatted calf, but they forget that first they must arise, and go to their Father, and acknowledge their sin. There is only one road to happiness, and that is the way of repentance. Always remember, dear brethren, that there are two sides to the plan of pardon, Jesus will do His part *if* we do ours; we must see our sins, and be sorry for our sins, and confess our sins, and amend our lives, if we are to find forgiveness.

Again, the shallow Christians are those whose religion grows very fast, and as fast withers away. "Immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth; because it had no root it withered away." It is a common trick in London for a dishonest dealer to sell a flower apparently healthy and growing in a pot. The buyer is delighted with the beauty of the blossom and the greenness of the leaves, and he carries it home to his glass house. But as soon as the sun is up and shines upon the plant it withers away, and the owner discovers too late that it had no root. So it is with the shallow Christians. They are all very well to look at for a little time, but they do not last, because they have no root. These shallow Christians want to grow up to perfection in a very short time. They are sunk in the depths

of sin one day, and standing in the front rank of saints the next. They are drunkards one week, and temperance lecturers the week after. They are outcasts to-day, and sitting in judgment on their neighbours to-morrow. Beware, brethren, of this quick-growing religion, it never lasts. Like the mushroom, it springs up fast, and turns to decay fast also.

These shallow people are very enthusiastic about their religion at first, but the fire of zeal burns too fiercely to last, and presently it is only cold ashes. These people come to us full of eagerness, they become candidates for Confirmation, they desire to be Communicants, they will join the choir, or teach in the Sunday School, or do some other work for the Church, and then the question comes—How long will it last? When a man enters for a race it is not so much a question as to whether he can run faster than others, but whether he has *staying power*, whether he can hold out to the end. We are not told to run the race of holiness very swiftly, but patiently. We are not expected to develop into full-grown Christians in a single day, but to grow in grace, and to *keep on* growing to the end. The shallow Christians have no root in themselves, the good seed of God does not go down deep enough, so it soon withers away. Of such an one we read, "Yet hath he no root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the Word, by-and-bye he is offended." This sort of Christian does very well as long as the road is

smooth and easy, but, like timid runners, they stumble at the first fence. Like Jonah, they sit comfortably under the shelter of their gourd, but when the east wind comes they want to run away from their duty.

Some people's religion is like a pretty, flimsy garment, which the first storm ruins. True religion is strong enough to bear the roughest wind of persecution and the fiercest storms of a troublesome world. I have known boys who were very anxious to go to sea, and who were enthusiastic about the life afloat. But when they had tried it for a little while, and learnt how hard and rough a life it is, only the few remained, the many were discouraged. So is it with many professing Christians. They do not mind being called followers of Jesus as long as all things are made easy for them; but they forget that we must through great tribulation pass into Heaven, that our life here is a battle, a struggle, a race. So they drop out of the race, they run away from the battle, they take no part in the struggle. The religion which grew so fast, as quickly withers away. There is no depth of earth, no depth of character, *no root*.

"When tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the Word, by-and-bye he is offended." In the old days persecution came in the form of torture and imprisonment and death. But there were sturdy Christians then who went to the lions, and the cross, and the fire, and were faithful to the end. There are persecutions for Christians now, and many tribulations,

but of a different kind. A religious man is foolish enough to marry a careless, irreligious woman, who laughs at his Church-going, and sneers at holy things. If the man is one of the shallow Christians he cannot bear this, he is afraid of ridicule ; so many of us are. He turns his back on the Altar, his place in Church knows him no more. Young people leave their home and parish where they sang in the choir, or came to Sunday School, and were regular worshippers in Church. They go out to work for their living in some distant place, and they fall among careless companions, who mock at religion. They ridicule the idea of Church-going, or prayer, or Bible reading, and if the young man or woman is a shallow Christian, with no depth of religion, he drops gradually into the same way as his companions. His private prayers go, his Bible goes, he gives up worshipping God in Church, he is on the down grade, living without God in the world.

These people who were so hot in their religion a little while ago are cold enough now. They came running to Jesus, like the young ruler ; like him, they have gone away again. They who shouted "Hosanna" but yesterday, are ready to say "Crucify Him" to-day. And now notice the *reason* of this. The seed grew quickly and as quickly withered away, because it lacked depth of earth, and because of the hard rock. The shallow Christian has a little thin surface religion, but his heart is hard as a stone. His religion is entirely of the outside, what little there is ; there is no depth in it, no

root in it, no heart in it. People come to Church month after month, year after year, and the good seed of God never brings forth any lasting fruit from them, because they are shallow. The good and holy thoughts which spring up now are withered and gone before next Sunday. There is the hard heart stopping all growth of goodness. The good seed, the Word of God, falls on the surface of these people; they like a sermon to touch them lightly, as a child might touch the surface of the soil with a toy rake. If the preacher drives down deep they are offended, because he jars against the stony heart. These people are more or less acting a part in religion instead of being religious. You see an actor on the stage, and his face is painted and disguised till he looks very handsome and very noble. But presently, when the paint is washed off, he looks neither noble nor handsome. So the shallow, surface religion of many people is like the actor's paint. They appear very good Christians outwardly, but in reality they are very poor creatures indeed.

Lastly, think of the *remedy*. All the good seed and all the sowing will not help us as long as our heart is hard and cold. The best seed in the world would not grow on a granite rock, and all our Church-going and listening to God's Word is useless if we bring a hard heart with us. God alone can change our heart. God will change it if we ask Him. We need the power of the Holy Spirit to come upon the rocky heart as the gentle dew comes on the soil. We need to pray,

especially when we come to Church, or read our Bible at home, "Create in me a new heart, O Lord, and renew a right spirit within me." Then I would say to you, be *real*, be *genuine*. Do not pretend to be what you are not. Do not dress up and masquerade as a Christian if you are nothing of the kind. Look deep into your own hearts, and look often. See whether you are real or not. Look whether your religion goes deep down into your nature, or is only a shallow covering to a hard, impenitent heart. You may be able to deceive yourselves, many do, but you cannot deceive God. Pray that the seed sown to-day may take root and bear fruit an hundredfold.

Sermon XXII.

THORNY GROUND.

S. LUKE VIII. 7.

"Some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it."



ONE great poet says, "Oh, how full of briars is this working-day world." Most of us know the truth of this by experience. These thorns and briars are of various kinds. Some of them are troubles and sorrows sent to us for our correction and our good, like the thorn in the flesh which was given to S. Paul. Others are the temptations and trials which belong to every position and calling in this world, and which, if allowed to have the mastery, choke and smother our religious life. In the parable of the sower and the seed we are told that some of the seed fell upon thorny ground. This ground was quite different from the hard wayside, or the shallow, rocky soil. The wayside and the rock were not prepared to receive seed, so it could not grow there to any extent. This thorny ground was good soil, it had been made ready for the

seed, which grew up when it was sown. But the weeds grew up as well, thorns, brambles, thistles, sprang up with the good seed and choked it. The ground was not kept clean. No one, of course, can prevent weeds springing up on his land, but the careful farmer does not let them get the mastery. The thorny ground, then, represents those people who receive God's Word, who accept the claims and duties of religion, but let the things of this world grow upon them till the religious life is choked and smothered. We cannot help being surrounded by the cares and pleasures and work of the world, any more than we can help the weeds appearing in our fields; but we must take care that they do not master us, or our spiritual life will be like a neglected garden, smothered by briars and thorns. Our Lord explains this part of the parable by saying that they who receive the seed on the thorny ground are they which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life. You see, our thorns are very different.

With some of us there is the *thorn of care*. Troubles, anxieties, worries, in a thousand forms come into our life. We cannot prevent them from coming, but we can prevent them from being our masters. People sometimes tell me that they have no time for religion. There are the children to provide for, the many mouths to feed, the household duties requiring constant attention, there is no time for Church-going, no time for Bible-reading, no time for prayer. Brethren, these

worried people are just those who need the help of religion most. What can you do without God? Will all your worry and anxiety give the children their daily bread? Will all your fretting and repining give that sick child its health again? You can do nothing without God. You may have little time to spare, but you must give some of it to God, you must find time to pray; the more cares you have, the more need of earnest prayer. If you let your sorrows and worries come between you and God you will be like the ground where the thorns grew up with the good seed and choked it. You may say to me—You do not know what my cares are, how troublesome are my surroundings. Of course each heart knows its own bitterness, and each of us has his special thorn; but I know this, that whatever your troubles are, you cannot bear them properly unless you do so in a religious spirit, unless the Lord God helps you. It may be difficult to lead a patient, holy life in the midst of scenes of worry and disorder. It may be hard for women with drunken husbands, and men with quarrelsome wives, to live as Christ's servants. It is hard, but not impossible. This is your thorn, my brother, my sister; do not let it choke your religion.

I once conducted a Mission in a certain Church in the East End of London. It stood in a noisy, busy street. The world, the flesh, and the devil were all represented in that street. There were people buying and selling with noisy clamour, there were music and

dancing, song and jest, oath and blasphemy, drunkenness and vice, all was noise and turmoil. What a surrounding for a Church! Then when I went inside, out of that bit of thorny ground, all was peace and holy calm. There in the Church were people kneeling at the Altar, or listening to the Word of Life, or singing the praises of Him Who died upon the Cross. Brethren, our inner life ought to be like that Church. Though we live in an atmosphere of worry and excitement, and worldliness and care, we ought to have a holy calm inside us. Our heart should be like the Sanctuary, with God present there. And this is possible if we pray enough. Those people in East London could lead earnest, devout lives in the midst of all those hideous surroundings, because they lived a life of prayer. There were plenty of thorns about them, but they did not let them choke the good seed. In your homes you have a place for everything, for your tools, your books, your clothes. Well, have a place for your *prayers*. No matter how poor and small a place it is, no matter if it be but a rude chair and a strip of carpet, keep it sacred, keep it for prayer; fly to it often in the day if just for a minute or two, it is the only way to keep down the thorns, "pray without ceasing." If you were going out to walk over rough and thorny ground you would not go barefoot, you would protect your feet. Every day of our lives we have, in one sense, to take our journey over rough ways, to walk among thorns. This world is full of briars, and we

must have our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, we must be clothed with righteousness, we must be wrapped up in prayer.

If we try to go through life without religion, we shall find that the thorns will master us. They will tear our white robe to pieces, they will wound our hands and feet, they will choke all the good in us. Many of the troubles and cares of life are *small things*. We daily have to meet with trying tempers, petty vexations and disappointments, and these small things can cause a great deal of pain. A thorn is a very little thing, but it sets up a vast amount of inflammation. If we let the small thorns of every day grow upon us they will smother our religious life. The best Christians are not those who do some one great thing for their Master, but who live all their lives in the thorny ground of trial and trouble, yet bring forth fruit unto holiness. Remember that God will not take all the thorns out of our path, or the stones from our feet, but He *will* give us strength to go on to the end if only we ask Him. We must not wish for another kind of life, and other surroundings; we must not say—I cannot lead a godly life under these circumstances. Where you are, God put you. Rather learn to say—Lord, help me to be patient, to be faithful, to be true wherever I am. Help me to bring forth good fruit even among the thorns.

With some of us the danger lies in the *business thorns*. Now a Christian's chief business is to live a holy life, he must, like Jesus Christ, be about his Father's

business. But many of us do not understand this. They think work, and the money earned by work, are everything, and religion of little importance. Of course every true man will put his heart into his work, and do it as well as ever he can ; but he must not make it his god. The prophet speaks of those who “ sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag, because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous.” We know that in India it is a common thing for a native workman to say his prayers to his basket of tools. But it is not the heathen alone who do these things. Many a business man in Christian England to-day worships the work of his own hands. His only Church is his shop or office, his only Bible the money article of the newspaper. Do you remember the story of Micah, as told in the Book of Judges ? It was in the evil days when there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes. Instead of worshipping Jehovah, Micah had a house of gods, and set up idols in his home. In time the warriors of the tribe of Dan entered the house of Micah, and carried away his idols, and then, in his despair, he cried, “ Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and what have I more ? ” Well, the man who makes his business his god is like that foolish idolater. The time surely comes when he must leave his house of idols. His last day’s work is done, they will not see him again at the office, or the counting house, or the place of business. The man is dying alone, and he cries out, “ Ye have

taken away my gods which I made, and what have I more ? ” Ay, what indeed !

Thus for one the thorn is the *care* of the world, for another the *work* of the world. The sharp thorn of poverty hurts one, the clinging, choking love of riches another. The Lord calls the thorns the *deceitfulness* of riches. It is not the money that is dangerous, but the wrong use made of it. If a man's only object of worship is money, whether he be a labourer with a few shillings a week, or a millionaire with his thousands of pounds, he is letting the love of money choke the good seed of religion within him. I have known men, once regular Church-goers and faithful Communicants, who gave up the service of God just because they had gained a field or two, or acquired a little more money. Surely a man is like the fool in the Gospel, if he lets his farm, or his merchandise, or anything in the world stand between him and salvation.

Again, for others the thorns take the form of the *pleasures of life*. Life's cares choke the good seed of holiness in some lives, life's pleasures do the like in the case of others. Now pleasures, as long as they are innocent and pure, are the roses of life, which make it sweet and beautiful. There is nothing in the religion of Jesus Christ which teaches us to be gloomy and sad. Christianity makes happy faces, merry laughter, singing voices ; it has nothing to do with melancholy, and groanings, and discontent. The same Jesus Who played as a little child among the children on the hillsides of

Nazareth, Who later on took the little ones in His arms and blessed them, the merry, laughing children, Who beautified and sanctified the home life at Bethany, Who joined in the marriage feast at Cana, loves to see His people happy now. Yes, the pleasures of life are its roses, but they may easily become its thorns. If we let our amusements crowd out our religious duties, if the Church is forsaken, and Sunday devoted to selfish gratification, if our home life separates us from God instead of drawing us closer to Him, then we are letting the thorns choke the good seed. We often find people who, after they have assumed the cares and joys of married life, drift farther and farther away from religion. Like him in the parable, many a man says to the Gospel invitation, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." Ah, my brother, why not come, and bring the wife with you?

Take, again, the various athletic sports and games so common among us. They are good in themselves if they are used rightly, and only so. A man must not cultivate his body at the cost of his soul. A man, because he hardens his muscles, need not harden his heart. We must not put our amusements in the first place. Duty, religion, claims that. "Life is real, life is earnest." Life is a very serious thing, something far more important than a cricket score or a football match. There is a tendency in the present day to put play into the foremost place, as though we were sent into the world as into a playing field. We even find

people who make games their calling, and become professional players. Now I can understand a professional *worker*, but not the other. Take care, my brethren, how you put your sports before your religion. Take care that you do not transfer the worship due to Almighty God to a football, or a bicycle, or a cricket bat.

“The fruit of the Spirit is goodness.” Goodness is a fruit which cannot grow to perfection if the thorns overpower it and choke it. Look, then, into your life garden, look into your heart, and see if anything there is hindering your spiritual prayers, choking the good seed. Is there anything in your work, in your home life, in your pleasures, which keeps you back from leading a holy and a Christian life? If so, ask the help of God’s Holy Spirit, and though the thorns may wound you and tear you, pluck them out and cast them from you.

Sermon XXIII.

THE SHIELD.

EPHESIANS VI. 16.

"Above all, taking the shield of faith."



AMONG the ancients the shield was a most important part of defensive armour. To lose it in battle was considered the greatest disgrace, indeed the Spartans had a law by which if a soldier returned without his shield, he was put to death. S. Paul had this fact in his mind when he spoke about putting on the whole armour of God, and of holding fast to the faith as a good soldier holds on to his shield. This faith is the gift of God. "The fruit of the Spirit is faith." It is only by the power of the Holy Ghost that we can have a right faith and a right judgment in all things. This faith also is not *any* faith, but *the* faith. We pray that "all who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold *the faith* in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life." It is not a faith which anyone can choose, or make for himself, it is *the* Catholic faith, given by God to His Church, "the faith once

delivered to the saints," one and the same always and everywhere. We often find people among us who in case of illness, instead of going to a hospital or a qualified doctor, try to cure themselves with some worthless and even harmful drug. They tell us that they have perfect *faith* in the remedy. But this is not faith, it is blind, ignorant confidence. So in religious matters, we find people forming societies of their own, and holding the most extravagant and false doctrines, and talking about their faith. This is merely self-confidence, they believe in themselves, nothing more. This is not the faith which S. Paul means, this is no shield to cover us in the hour of danger.

The faith of course includes many things. First of all, it means a *full trust in the promises of the Lord Jesus Christ*. You say that you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. But what do you mean by this? Do you merely believe in the historical facts that Jesus Christ came on this earth, and died on the Cross, and rose again from the dead, and ascended into Heaven? If this belief does not affect your way of life it is of no value. You say you believe that Jesus died for your sins. Just believing in the fact alone will not help you ; unless your belief makes you hate your sins, and repent of your sins, and fight against your sins, it is in vain. You believe that Jesus has promised you the forgiveness of your sins, but only on condition that you truly repent, and unfeignedly believe His holy Gospel. If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ you will shew

forth your faith not only with your lips, but in your lives, by giving up yourselves to His service, and walking before Him in holiness and righteousness all your days. If you do this, you have another promise of the Master's, that He will be with you, His Church, alway, even unto the end of the world. Some people are thinking, and hoping, and wishing; we who hold the faith are *certain*. We do not think that Jesus is with us, or hope that He will hear, or wish that He would help us, we *know*. When we bring a child to be baptized, we are perfectly certain that it is born again of water and the Holy Spirit, that God has received it as His own child by adoption, and incorporated it into His holy Church; we are perfectly certain that Jesus has taken the child into His loving arms, and that the Holy Spirit has come to dwell in him. When we draw near to the Altar of the Blessed Sacrament, we *know* that Jesus is present there, that He comes to us veiled in the Sacrament, that He says to us as distinctly as to the first Apostles, "Take, eat, this is My Body." So you see the shield of the faith means a perfect trust in the power, and the love, and the promises of Jesus Christ. We must hold fast to our shield. The warrior of old might never leave go his defence for a moment during the battle without danger and disgrace. In the battle of life in which we, the Church Militant, are all engaged, we must hold fast to our shield. We must hold fast our faith *in the face of persecution*.

In the early days of the Church these persecutions

took the most dreadful forms. If we go back in memory to ancient Rome we shall see a little band of men and women meeting in the early morning in some underground chamber, or other secret spot. On that rude Altar they have celebrated the holy mysteries of the faith, they have been made known to each other in the breaking of bread and by the sign of the Cross. Suddenly a band of Roman soldiers with their officer breaks in upon the kneeling people. It is Cæsar's pleasure that the Christians shall be persecuted wherever found. Presently we look on a vast theatre; those pale, patient men and women are followers of the Lord Jesus, and these are here to die. Every kind of cruel torture awaits them. Tender women, like Blandina, are tossed by the horns of wild bulls, and then bound to a red-hot chair of iron. Little children are torn from their mother's arms and flung to the lions, and all Rome looks on with smiling indifference. But these persecuted martyrs are firm to the end, they never let go their shield.

We, my brethren, have no such terrible ordeal to face, but yet we may know persecution. In the place of work we may have to bear ridicule and insult because we are true to our faith; in our own home we may find that a man's foes are those of his own household. We may hear things we consider holy mocked at and blasphemed. We may be called hard names because we try to follow the steps of our Master's most holy life; in the day of temptation and persecution may

we hold fast to our shield. Let us hold fast to the promise of our Master that He will never leave us nor forsake us ; "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." That ought to make us confident. If Wellington had told his troops at Waterloo that he could not go with them into the battle, but that they must meet the forces of the enemy alone, we can believe that the bravest would have faltered, and that the victory would not have been to us. The presence of a great leader is everything in the hour of danger. Perhaps some of us try to excuse our sins by saying that we are so weak and so severely tempted. *We* may be weak, but Jesus Christ is Almighty, and He is with us. A famous captain who had to lead his few soldiers against a vast number of the enemy, heard one of the soldiers counting the odds, and saying it was impossible for the few men to overcome the many. Then the leader came forward and asked, "How many do you count *me* for?" When we think of our dangers and difficulties we must not dwell only on our weakness, we must remember the strength of our Leader, we must hold fast to our shield.

Again, we must hold fast to the shield of faith because we are *opposed by our enemy the devil*. "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." Everyone of us is doing one of two things, he is either having a stand-up fight with the devil every day of his life,

holding fast to the shield of faith, or he has cast away his shield like a coward, and is being led captive by Satan. He is either saying—By God's grace I *will* conquer this besetting sin, this evil habit of drunkenness, or uncleanness, or violent temper, or what not, or he is following the devil like a prisoner, bound hand and foot, and saying—I cannot help sinning. The devil fights in many different ways. He has all sorts of fiery darts in his quiver. He knows us far better than we know ourselves. As, says an old writer, "He taketh the measure of every man's foot, and then he fitteth him instantly." Sometimes he comes to us as a roaring lion, the lion of drunkenness and lust; sometimes he comes with a whispered temptation, as soft as the voice of an angel. Some wild animals seize their prey by pretending to be dead. In these days that is a favourite plan of the devil. He deceives men, and makes them believe that he is dead, that he no longer exists. Men who want to do wrong, say—I do not believe in these old world fables. People might believe in the devil in the old, ignorant, superstitious days, but we know better. There is no devil, the devil is dead. So men sin, because, like flies, they fall fearlessly into the snare, not seeing the watchful spider, who hides himself. The devil who tempted our first parents, who made Cain a murderer, and Achan a thief, and David an adulterer, and Ananias a liar, is not dead, nor sleeping either. Who among us has he not wounded?

Travellers who have been bitten by a lion tell us that,

years after they have recovered, the old wound throbs at times. We, I trust, have repented truly of our sins, and have fought down the temptation, but the old wound throbs at times. There is no middle course open to us ; we must either hold fast the shield of faith, and meet the devil fighting, or we must cast our shield away to our eternal ruin and disgrace. When I recall the once promising young men and women I have known, when I remember how they once loved their God, and their Church, and their Altar ; and when I look upon them now, and see them walking in the way of the destroyer, their armour broken, their good name gone, their shield cast away, I know of a truth that the devil is not dead.

You may say to me—I believe ; I have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, so all is well. My brethren, if you have the shield of faith, you must *use* it. You must not let it hang loosely, you must grasp it, hold fast to it, oppose it to the blows of the enemy. The warrior who has retired from the army may hang up his shield upon the wall, and lay by his sword in a corner. But there is no discharge in that war in which Christ's soldiers are engaged. You may not lay aside the shield of faith for a moment, your hand must cleave to the sword always. Our shield is meant for use, not for ornament. The follower of a famous leader of old once said, "I will turn my camel loose, and trust in Providence." And his master answered, "Not so, tie him up as tightly as you can, and then trust in Providence." We must

not be idle. We must not say that we trust to the Lord Jesus to bring us safely through all, and that therefore we have nothing to do. We must indeed trust Him to the uttermost, but we must do our part ; we must fight, we must stand firm, we must shut our ears to the voice of the tempter. God never takes anyone to the top of a steep hill unless he climbs. The soldier in battle does not say—I put my full trust in my comrades, we can win the battle, and so I shall not strike a blow. He says—I trust my leader perfectly ; what he orders I will do, and I will fight to the death. If you were in a shipwreck, and the vessel was going to pieces, you would put your trust in the Lord ; but you would cast yourself into the sea, and swim your hardest.

Again, we have need to hold fast to the shield of faith *because of our sorrows and trials*. Every soldier of Christ must learn to endure hardness. The Greek legends tell us how the mother of the hero Achilles, fearing for his life, withdrew him from war, and sent him disguised in female clothes to a place of safety. But after a while, when he was shown some women's robes and also some armour, he declared himself by seizing the armour. Our mother, the Church, will not have her sons to hide away like cowards. She bids us all put on the whole armour of God, and to stand armed in the evil day. For God's people, above all others, there are many sorrows and trials. "Many are the troubles of the righteous." No man has to fight so hard, and to bear

so much, and to deny himself so often as the soldier of Christ. In the olden days, when a father took his young son with him into battle for the first time, he would leave him to fight his way alone, but if he saw him too hard pressed he would hold his own shield over him. So in the battle of sorrow and trial, we must fight on, and hold fast to the shield of faith, and then if the struggle is too great for us the Lord Jesus will be with us and defend us as with a shield. Soldiers of Christ, go on, fear not, neither be afraid. You shall be more than conquerors through Him Who loves you. Only be strong and very courageous, only hold fast to your shield. Then shall you be able to stand in the day of evil and to say—

“Nor wind nor storm may turn me back,
For I see the beacon fire,
And time shall yield a hard fought field,
And with God's help, an unstained shield,
I win my heart's desire.”

Sermon XXIV.

STEADFAST AND TRUE.

I CORINTHIANS XV. 58.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."



WHEN the news of some great battle comes home, we read sometimes that the English soldiers stood firm as rock before the charge of the enemy. We are told that at Waterloo our troops were formed into squares, and remained absolutely unmoveable whilst the French cavalry dashed upon them again and again. I think S. Paul, who tells us so much about fighting the good fight, and putting on the whole armour of God, had a battle-field in his thoughts when he wrote, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable"; he tells us that Christ's soldiers must be firm as rock. We must think then what Jesus would have us to be if we profess and call ourselves Christians. First, we must be *steadfast*. Secondly, we must be *unmoveable*. Thirdly, we

must be *working Christians*, "always abounding in the work of the Lord." Lastly, the *reason of all this*.

First, we must be *steadfast*. If a man is to stand firm, he must have something firm to stand upon. Along our sea coast at various places there were formerly houses, even whole villages, built on the cliff. Now their place knows them no more. The cliff has been undermined by the sea, and worn away by the weather, and it has crumbled and fallen, and the houses have gone with it. In some parts of the country where salt mines exist, towns and villages are gradually sinking and disappearing. These are built on a bad foundation, and so they cannot stand. If we would be steadfast, we must take our stand on a good foundation.

Be steadfast in a *sure faith in God*. There are too many people nowadays who go about asking, like Pilate, "What is truth?" and end by believing in nothing at all. We could not find our way through this world if we did not believe and trust anybody. We should never ask a question, or seek advice, if we thought every man was a liar. Neither shall we ever find our way to Heaven if we cannot believe God's Word and God's promises. Take a firm stand on the *Bible* in which God has spoken to us. These are days when some people seem to think that God's Bible is a fair mark for all their criticism, for all their doubt, for all their fault-finding. Some speak of it as though it were a beautiful poem, full of imagination but quite impossible. Others treat it as though it were a romance

of olden time, full of old world fancies and superstitions, very interesting, but quite unreliable. They tell us that the Bible contradicts itself, that one part is not the same as another. What then? We must remember that the Bible is not *one* book, but many, written by men of very different characters and positions, who lived in very different ages. The Bible is not one volume, but a library of volumes, dealing with a vast period of time; and God permitted the writers to express themselves in their own way, but yet for all that, they wrote for God, and by His inspiration. We might be ready to give up the Bible after all these long years if anyone could give us something better, but no one ever has, so let us stand firm on the foundation of God's Word. The Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, constantly appealed to, and quoted from, the Old Testament. Do we know more about God's Bible than does God's Son?

Be ye steadfast in the *principles of the Church* into which you were baptized. Some people seem to change their religious principles as often as they change their clothes. They are Churchmen one week, and something else the next. If they take service with a Churchman, they call themselves Churchmen and Communicants. If they live with those who are not Churchmen, they change their principles. Such people, if they dwelt in the house of a priest of Baal, would sacrifice in the temple of Baal. We have no respect or confidence for the politician who joins one party one

day and another the next. So it is impossible to believe in the religion of those who are "everything by turns, and nothing long." My beloved brethren, be steadfast in your principles, be sure as to what you believe, and take your stand firmly upon it. I walk along the sea coast, and come to a spot where I remember a house to have once stood. Now there is no trace of it. The face of the cliff and the building upon it have both vanished. I look upon certain people whom I remember as apparently earnest Churchmen. I prepared them for Confirmation, I gave them their first Communion, I saw them week after week in God's House. And now they have fallen from the right way, the Church and the Altar know them no more, like the house and the cliff, they have gone to ruin, because they had no foundation. They did not stand firm.

Again, be ye *steadfast in using the means of grace*. People say to me—I pray sometimes. I come to Church off and on. Ah, brethren, that will not do. You would not tell me that you eat and breathe sometimes. You know you could not live without doing both regularly. Well, your soul cannot live unless you feed and nourish and cultivate it every day. Prayer, praise, the study of Holy Scripture, the Sacraments of the Church, are as essential to your soul's health as your daily food and clothing are to your bodily health. Brethren, do not starve your souls.

Secondly, we are bidden not only to be steadfast, but to be *unmoveable*. Many a one is very much in earnest

and very steadfast for a time, but he falls at the last. We must be unmoveable, enduring unto the end. We must be unmoveable against the *attacks of enemies*. Have you ever looked out on the Eddystone Lighthouse on a stormy night? The great waves come thundering against it, the storm sweeps over it; but it stands firm and steadfast, and its light burns clear above the darkness. My brethren, we should be like that lighthouse. When the enemies of the truth attack us, and try to shake our faith and our principles; when they try to argue with us, and to sneer at the Church and the Bible, and all that we hold sacred, let us be unmoveable, and let the light of our faith shine out over the darkness of their doubts, so that men may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in Heaven.

We must be unmoveable *by the bad example of our neighbours*. We are not living in Paradise, but in a sinful world, and we cannot help hearing and seeing much evil. We are forced to live sometimes among a people of unclean lips, and to look upon those who in their lives break God's holy laws. We must not be led astray by their bad example. Because we are mingled with the heathen of Christian England, we need not learn their ways. Because there are dirty places in the journey of life, we need not seek them out. We must be *unmoveable*. If you were to visit a manufactory where they make magnetic compasses, you would see numbers of them finished and polished, and all looking exactly alike. But some of the compasses point steadily to the

North, and return to it whenever moved away. Others point in whatever position they were placed. The reason is that the true compass is magnetized, and points ever in one direction, the North. Brethren, if we are magnetized by the love of Christ, we shall always *point one way*; we shall not be changed by the company we meet, or the place where we dwell, we shall *point true*, we shall be unmoveable.

We must be unmoveable by the *persecutions of the world*. They will not throw us to the wild beasts or cast into prison in these days, but there are some who will laugh at us and point the finger of scorn at us if we try to be steadfast. Many a one has to bear persecution if he shows his colours as a Christian. Brethren, we must be unmoveable. Do not let foolish and wicked people laugh you out of doing your duty, or argue you out of doing your duty, be ye steadfast, unmoveable.

We must be unmoveable by the *pleasures of the world*. Its smiles are often more dangerous than its blows. David was safe so long as his hand cleaved to the sword, and he endured hardness as a good soldier. It was in the hour of ease and luxury that he fell. Hannibal and his soldiers were as iron before the armies of Rome, but they became as soft as wax amid the pleasures of Capua. Many a man has prayed and thanked God for a crust, who forgot Him when he was wealthy. Many a man who worshipped the Lord in a cottage, neglects Him in a mansion.

Again, we must be unmoveable *amidst the troubles of*

life. Sometimes in a violent storm we hear of a vessel being blown away from her moorings. Then what happens? The vessel is nearly always driven before the gale to shipwreck and destruction. When the storm of trouble comes down upon us we must be unmoveable, we must not drag our anchor. Many people are steadfast in God's service as long as the fine weather of prosperity lasts, but they go adrift when the stormy wind and tempest come. Brethren, trust God when He takes away as much as when He gives. Be ye steadfast, unmoveable.


Next, S. Paul tells us that we are not only to be steadfast, unmoveable, *but always abounding in the work of the Lord.* In our army there are many soldiers who belong to the reserve forces, and who live a peaceful, inactive life till the reserves are called out. It is different in the army of the Church. We are all fighting men there, there is no short service, no retirement, no reserves. We are all on the active list, we must abound in the work of the Lord, we must fight in the battle of the Lord. We are bidden *always* to abound in the work of the Lord. That means that our religion is not merely for Sunday. Whether ye eat, or whether ye drink, or whatsoever ye do, whether ye open a shop, or work in a factory, or drive a team, or sweep out a room, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus. And we must *abound* in the work of the Lord, we must be full of work, full of zeal for God's service. We must put our whole heart, and soul, and mind, and

strength into our religion. In a word, our religion must be our life. We must not attend a Sunday parade in Church once a week, and think that our religious life ends there. We must *abound*, our religion must flow out into all we do. We must put our religion into our daily work, we must do it with our might, we must abound in the work of the Lord. We must abound in our *prayers*. They must not be poor, starved petitions, uttered with cold, unfeeling lips, very seldom. They must abound, and come pouring forth from hearts full of love and faith. We must abound in our *praises*. We must feel with David, "His praise shall *ever* be in my mouth." Not only beneath the Church roof, but under the blue canopy of God's Heaven, in our place of work and labour, we can say, "Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." We must abound in our *example*. We ought to live such lives that people can see in a moment, and at any moment, whose we are, and whom we serve. Our Christianity must come out of us and show itself. We must not keep it wrapped up in a napkin, and buried out of sight. We must so live and act that men may take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus; and so behave ourselves that others may say of us—I know that man to be a true follower of Christ by the way he speaks, by the way he works, by the way he keeps his temper, by the way he treats his neighbour.

Then, lastly, we are told the reason of all this, why we should be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding

in the work of the Lord ; because we *know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord*. We know it, because Jesus has told us that we shall rise from our grave to a future life, and that every man shall be rewarded according to his works. If this life were all, then we might indeed think that our labour was in vain. The man who works only for this world, for ambition, and wealth, and pleasure, finds disappointment and failure. He is like him of whom the classic story tells us who is condemned for ever to roll a stone uphill, which constantly rolls back to him again. Many a man who is living and working for this life only is rolling that stone uphill. But he who does God's work knows that his labour is not in vain in the Lord. He may not receive any reward here. He may find no other pleasure here than the sense that he is doing right, and that the fruit, the harvest, is yet far off. Our crown is *laid up* for us ; here we must wear the crown of thorns with our Master, the crown of glory is for the future. Here we must be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord ; and when the work is over, and the race won, and the victory gained, there will come the exceeding great reward—"Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."


Sermon XXV.



RESTING AND WAITING.

PSALM XXXVII. 7.

"Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him."

 STOOD once weary and sick at heart in one of our great Cathedrals. Suddenly from out the choir came the voice of a singing boy like the voice of an angel, and through the vast length of the Cathedral there floated the music of the exquisite anthem, "O rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him." As I listened, it seemed that the burden had fallen from me, that a delicious sense of restfulness had come, and I seemed to hear a whisper, "Come unto Me all ye that travail, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Yes, this Psalm is emphatically a song of restfulness, and we need not wonder that a saint of old time was converted to God by reading it. Have you known what it is to take a long and wearisome journey, with a body weakened by illness, and a mind full of anxiety and fear, and after many hours of travel, to reach your home and to find ministering hands ready to help you to your bed? And have you known the

exquisite feeling of being able to lie back in your bed, and say, "Here is rest"? Well, what that home coming is to the tired body, this Psalm is to the troubled mind, it teaches us to cast all our care upon the Lord, to rest in Him, to feel that underneath are the everlasting arms. "Rest in the Lord." That means perfect trust and confidence in the Lord. We cannot rest if we are full of doubts and fears and anxieties. The frightened child runs to its mother's arms—rests there, feeling perfectly safe. So is it with those who put their full trust and confidence in Jesus, they can say, "Into Thy Hands I commend my spirit, Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, Thou God of truth."

And the first result of this trustful resting in the Lord is a *sense of safety*. We have put our trust in the Lord, and therefore will not fear what man can do unto us. Whatever we may have to bear and suffer we know that all things work together for good for those who fear God. We are *safe*. Achilles, the great hero of the Greeks, was dipped in the fabled river by his mother, and rendered wound-proof except in the heel by which she held him. We who have passed through the waters of Holy Baptism, and have kept the faith, are whole every whit. We have put on the whole armour of God, and no weapon of the Evil One can harm us as long as we keep fast hold of the shield of faith. There is no dart in all the devil's quiver which can pierce through that.

Next, to rest in the Lord means to cast away *anxiously*.

The Lord's promise is, "Dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed; put thou thy trust in the Lord, and be doing good." He is a very poor Christian who cannot trust his Lord for to-morrow, who is ever crying, "Alas, Master, how shall we do?" Is the Lord's arm shortened or weakened since the days of Elijah? Cannot the same God keep your oil and meal from wasting? Oh, believe me, the God of Elijah has plenty of ravens in these days to minister to His people. "Dwell in the land," the good land of Christ's Church, the chosen land, the inheritance bought with the Saviour's Blood. Keep close to Jesus in prayer and worship and sacrament, and verily thou shalt be fed. The age of miracles is *not* gone. That feeding of the multitude is being repeated daily. At a thousand Altars God's priests receive the command, "Give ye them to eat." "Put thou thy trust in the Lord, and be doing good." Faith is not another name for idleness. We must not sit useless on life's highway and say, "I am trusting in the Lord." We must be up and doing, working in the vineyard, about our Father's business; we must be doing good, and we shall be fed. We have no cause for anxiety about to-morrow. Day by day we shall receive our daily bread if we ask for it. We know that though the world's prodigals are perishing with hunger by the swine-trough of sin, here in our Father's House there is bread and to spare. My brethren, cast away that heavy burden of anxiety which is bowing you down,

and spoiling your life. Put your whole trust and confidence in God. Hear how the Lord Jesus calls you—

“Lay down, thou weary one, lay down,
Thy head upon My Breast.”

“Rest in the Lord, delight thou in Him, and He shall give thee thy heart’s desire.”

Again, to rest in the Lord means *to have no fear*. God gives us this plain command, “Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.” What can we want more than that? As long as we keep close to God, and hold Him by the hand, we can know nothing of fear. Before sin came there was no fear. Adam walked the field of Paradise without misgiving as long as he was innocent, and close to God. When he had sinned, and hidden away from God, he learnt to say for the first time, “I was afraid.” So it is sin and want of faith which cause fear. The man who trusts in the Lord will fight the good fight against sin, the world, and the devil, and will not fear for the victory. Such was the confidence of our troops in Lord Wellington during the Peninsula War, that when he ordered that a certain strong fastness must be taken on a certain day, the soldiers answered, “It shall be done.” It seemed an impossible task; the fortifications towered overhead, bristling with guns, and crowded with men. It appeared a hopeless thing for a few troops to attack

such a stronghold. But no man hesitated or doubted, everyone had perfect faith in his leader, and went into action without fear. So with ourselves. We must not say that we are afraid the devil will be too strong for us, that we fear we shall not be able to hold out to the end, that we are too weak to withstand the force of temptation. We shall just trust in our Leader's promise, "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God," and so trusting, we shall go into the battle with temptation, and quit ourselves like men, and fight.

When two of our officers, during the Zulu campaign, had to hold Rorke's Drift with a handful of men against the overwhelming masses of the enemy, it seemed like an impossibility. But there was no talk of retreating, or of fear. One officer said to the other, "It has got to be done, so we had better set about it." We in this life are face to face with a vast army of enemies; we are called upon to defend the temple of our body, which holds that precious treasure, our soul, against them. Our Lord Jesus Christ has called us to be His soldiers, and to hold the fort. We must not, like cowards, say the task is too hard for us, but rather that it has got to be done, and by God's grace we will do it. I do not say that we shall not often be faint and weary in the fight. Many a brave soldier has carried a wound with him throughout the day's battle, but he fought on. There are times when the enemy cometh on so fast that we seem beaten down on our knees. Ah, that is

the best attitude to fight in. We shall gain more victories on our knees than anywhere else. Do you remember how when that brave piper of the Highlanders was shot in the feet, so that he could no longer stand, he continued to play a triumphal tune upon the bagpipes, and so cheered his comrades to victory. So we may be beaten down by some terrible temptation, but let us never give up God's praises, or retire from the battle. Jesus has promised, "I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness."

Again, the man who trusts in the Lord will not be afraid of his *trials and sorrows*. He knows he will have to meet them; we cannot expect to pass dry-shod, like Israel, into the Promised Land. We must go through the swellings of Jordan, we must pass through the deep waters of sorrow, we must taste the bitter draught at Marah, but for all this, we must not be afraid. Jesus has promised, "When thou passest through the waters, I am with thee." We shall not fear *loss*. There is only one loss which concerns us, and that is the loss of God. We may lose everything in the world, but if we have God, we are as those having nothing and yet possessing all things. Our friends may die, or forget us, but God cannot die, and never forgets. Men may look coldly upon us, but the angels will smile on us all the more. With some of us perhaps the temptation is to be afraid of *loneliness*. A man has lived long enough to see his friends and

relations pass away, and he is left alone. He looks forward to a lonely old age, and he shudders at the thought. My brethren, as long as you trust in the Lord you can never be alone. What is His promise? "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. Fear thou not, for I am with thee." Another of us, perhaps, may be afraid of losing his *health*. But what then? Cannot God make all his bed in his sickness? Is there any better place for us to rest our aching head upon than the breast of the loving Jesus? Is there any better doctor or nurse than Jesus, the Good Physician, than God Who pitieth His own children? You may lose your health, but you shall find more than you lose, and from your crown of thorns you shall gather the sweet roses of patient resignation.

"O rest in the Lord." "Wait patiently for Him." Most of us are terribly impatient. We want to see the fruit of our actions, the answer to our prayers, at once. It has been said that everything comes to him who knows how to wait, but so few of us do know how; we are like foolish children who pluck at the fruit before it has had time to ripen. We want to reap the harvest as soon as the seed is sown. We must learn to wait patiently the Lord's leisure. But this waiting is not to be a life of slumber and inaction; we must wait watching, praying, fighting, working. We must do our part, and wait patiently for the Lord to do His. We must sow the good seed, and wait for God to give the harvest. We must fight the good fight of the faith, the victory is

with the Lord. Our daily life is made up of little things ; little efforts, which often seem to fail ; little prayers, which seem to pass away and become lost ; plans and resolutions and strivings after better things. And we fail and we fall so often ; we climb a little way up to-day, and to-morrow we seem to slip back again. We weave the threads of our life into a good pattern one day, but the next it seems all unravelled again. Then we become disappointed, we grow weary in well-doing, we say our life is a failure, that it is useless to try any longer, we cry with the prophet, " Take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers."

Brethren, learn to labour and to wait, rest in the Lord, commit all your ways, all your life, all your work into His Hands. Do the best you can, and wait patiently for the Lord to bring it to pass. Those little efforts and strivings of ours, those prayers, those tears of penitence and of disappointment were not in vain. In a certain great Cathedral the most beautiful of the stained windows is said to be made of the fragments of broken glass which the workmen had thrown away as useless. Let us put our lives into the Hands of Jesus, and He will make out of our falls and failures something higher and nobler and better than we had before. We may seem to fail over and over again, we may climb and slip backward repeatedly, but if we persevere, if we keep on climbing, we shall have our reward. We may not find it here ; Moses never entered the Promised Land in spite of all his pilgrimage, but he


found something better. Jesus only found a Cross, but afterwards He saw of the travail of His Soul, and was satisfied. We may seem to lose much here, but we gain more than we lose, just as we miss the sweet blossoms from our trees that we may find them again in the fruit. The little duties we tried to do, and with all our trying did so badly; the little words we tried to speak to comfort another; the poor prayers we spoke, and the praises we sang, are not lost nor wasted. We shall find them again some day, as we find the May blossom of our orchards once more in the golden fruit of Autumn. Only be patient, dear souls, "rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; commit thy way unto the Lord, and put thy trust in Him, and He shall bring it to pass."

Sermon XXVI.

THE HOUSE BEAUTIFUL.

PSALM XXIII. 6.

"I will dwell in the House of the Lord for ever."

"Y Baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven." I wonder how often we have paused to think seriously on the meaning of those words. They were spoken perhaps carelessly and thoughtlessly in childhood, and forgotten in manhood; yet they mean everything to us, they are the seal on the charter of our salvation. Let me try to bring the matter before you in the form of a parable or allegory. I look on a child dirty and ragged, standing alone and uncared for in the cold street. That child represents every one of us born into the cold street of the world, homeless, a waif and stray. We belonged to the world which lies in sin, and we carried the taint of sin in our nature. I look on the child again, and I see that he draws near to a house exceedingly beautiful and lofty, from whose windows a clear light shines out into the dark street. The child looks through the

windows, and sees that within the House Beautiful there is a large family assembled, old and young are there, and all seem happy; outside in the street it is cold and dark and miserable, within the House Beautiful all is bright and peaceful and glad. And the child sighs to think the pleasures of that House are not for him; he does not belong to the family, he is outside the House. For him is the world, and the whole world lieth in darkness. I look again, and I see that kindly hands have led the child to the door of the House Beautiful, where he longs to enter. But before he can pass through the gate, he must be washed and clothed. The foulness which he has brought with him must be done away, the rags must be cast aside, and the child must be clothed in white like all the other members of the household. Then he passes through the gate of the House Beautiful, and becomes one of the household. There we have a picture of our entry into the Church, the Household of God, our Father's House, the House Beautiful. Like the child in the cold street, we come into the world as waifs and strays, with the taint of Adam's sin upon us. We bear, as an awful heritage, the sin, the shame of our first father. When we were baptized we were admitted into the Church, the House Beautiful, our birth sin was washed away, we were clothed with the white robe of righteousness, it was said of us, "But ye are washed, ye are clean." We who belonged by nature to a wicked world, to the family of Adam which has fallen, were adopted into the family

of God. We became new creatures, and began a new life, we were born into a new state of existence. We were made in our Baptism members of Christ, the children of God, inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven. We were *made* all this ; we were not born so. We were outside the family, outside the House Beautiful, out in the cold street of a wicked world, till our Baptism opened unto us the door. Then we received a name, a Christian name, by which God knows us and calls us. He knows every child of His great Family, and calls them all by their names. The lamb does not always know its own mother, but the mother always knows its own lamb. So we may forget that our Christian name means that we are Christ's, but the Lord knows us, and calls us by name.

What, then, did our Baptism do for us ? It made us *members* of Christ, a part of that holy, mystical body, the Church, which is called Christ's Body. We were grafted into that body as a shoot is grafted into a tree ; and we became a part of that body, one with Christ, one with each other. Baptism made us *the* children of God, part of the family dwelling in the House Beautiful, with all the same blessings and privileges as the other children. Baptism made us *inheritors* of the Kingdom of Heaven. Now people often mistake these words. They think that they refer to something hereafter, a promise that we shall go to Heaven when we leave this earth. But remember that an *inheritor* means someone who has come into possession of his

property now, not one who will have it in the future. And remember next, that the Kingdom of Heaven does not mean some vague place beyond the sky, but the Church of Christ here in earth, and in Paradise; the Kingdom over which Jesus rules, the Kingdom which He purchased with His precious Blood, the Palace where He is King, the House Beautiful. We have come into our inheritance now, we were in our Baptism made inheritors, not heirs, of the Kingdom of Heaven. As soon as we were admitted into the Church, into the Family of God, into the House Beautiful, we came into possession of our Kingdom, we became citizens of no mean city, all the rights and privileges of the Kingdom were ours.

We must not stay to think too much of what we *shall* be, we must think of what we are. “*Now* are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.” Surely it is enough for us to know that we are God’s children. Think what it means to be God’s children, members of His Family, part of the Household of the House Beautiful. It means that we have a *home*. The Church is our home, our eternal home, one which is not only here on earth, but extends beyond the grave. We have a *name*, which shows that we are Christ’s, and He is ours. The family name, or surname, is a mere accident, and of little importance. Indeed for many ages surnames were unknown among us. Our true name is that which God gives us, and by which He knows us, our *Christian* name. We have a *sign* or

mark upon us by which we are known. You see the sheep in a meadow, and know by the mark upon them to whom they belong. They are someone's property, not the wild, ownerless sheep upon the mountains. So we bear about in our bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus. We are signed with the Cross, and all men should be able to recognize us as Christ's people by our life and conversation.

We have certain *precious privileges*. A Roman citizen of old had many rights and advantages; a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven, a Churchman, has still greater. We have *peace of heart*, that peace which the outside world cannot give. We have *loving fellowship* one with another, as well as with our Master, "Ye are all one in Christ Jesus." We have the *forgiveness of our sins* assured to us if we truly repent and unfeignedly believe. We have *spiritual strength* given to us by the Sacraments, which makes us able to do all things, to believe all things, to bear all things. We have *constant communication* with the Head of the Family, the Lord Jesus. We can go to Him at any moment in prayer, His ear is ever open to hearken to us; we can approach Him in the Blessed Sacrament, and find in His presence the fulness of joy.

We have the *best of instruction*. All the year round, as the various seasons pass, there is a course of teaching for us in the House Beautiful. All the year round God's Word is a lantern unto our feet, and a light unto our path. Under all circumstances God takes

care of us. For the children there are Holy Baptism and Confirmation. For the man and woman there is Holy Marriage, sanctifying and blessing their union. All through life there is the Holy Food of the Altar. In sickness there is comfort and absolution, when we die there is Christian burial. But do our blessings and privileges end with death? Surely not. We are promised beyond the grave such good things as pass man's understanding. Here we are inheritors, but we are heirs also, heirs of the resurrection of the body and the life of the world to come. One day, after we have lived our appointed time in the House Beautiful here on earth, and finished the work which the Master has given us to do, we shall lie down very weary and sleep, and this men call death. But death will not take us away from our home and its privileges. God's angels will take us by the hand, and lead us upstairs to a higher chamber in the House Beautiful, a place of rest and peace, where there is no noise of battle or sound of weeping, for God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes. And that upper chamber is called Paradise. And one day, the last great day of all, when our Lord shall come in power and great glory, we shall climb still higher in the House Beautiful, right into the presence of the King in His beauty, and so shall we be ever with the Lord. Then we shall have come into our "inheritance uncorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." Such are the good things given to us in our Baptism.

But we must remember our own part in the matter. Great privileges bring great responsibilities, great rewards mean faithful discharge of duty. We are the children of God, members of His Household, the Church. That means that we must *observe the rules of the House*. No one can remain in a family unless he does that. Certain things are required of us all.

First, it is required that we shall have *perfect trust and confidence* in our Master. That is called *faith*. We must believe that what the Head of our Family, the Lord Jesus Christ, says and does is right. We must not question it, or doubt it, we must believe. Next, we must *obey orders*. A house divided against itself cannot stand. No family can possibly continue if every member is a law unto himself, and refuses to obey the rules of the household. So we who belong to the Church of Christ, who are admitted into the House Beautiful, must keep the Commandments of the Master. One of those Commandments is that we should love one another. We must not live and act only for ourselves, but for each other. As the bees gather sweetness for the good of the whole hive, so we must act for the common good, pray for the common good, because we are all one family, dwelling in the House Beautiful. Another of the Master's Commandments is that we shall *work*. The Church, the House Beautiful, is not meant for idlers. The Master says to each one of us—Son, go work in My vineyard. Dwell in the land, and be doing good. Yet another command is that we shall

fight. In some countries every man is compelled in his youth to train as a soldier, and is therefore always prepared to take part in the defence of his fatherland. When we were admitted by Baptism into the House Beautiful, we were not only members of Christ, the children of God, and inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven, but we were enlisted as soldiers, we put on the whole armour of God, and it was asked for us in prayer that we might continue Christ's faithful soldiers and servants unto our life's end. We must fight for the honour of the House Beautiful in which we dwell, we must fight for the honour of the banner of the Cross under which we serve, we must fight for the honour of Jesus Christ, Whose soldiers and servants we are. And in this battle with sin, and the world, and the flesh, we must stand by each other, shoulder to shoulder, as comrades in the same army, and never be ashamed to call him a brother whom God is not ashamed to call a son.

Sermon XXVII.

QUITE SAFE.

DEUTERONOMY XXXIII. 27.

"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the Everlasting Arms."



HIS was part of the blessing pronounced by Moses upon one of the tribes of Israel. Each of these tribes received a blessing, but it was different in each case. So is it with God's people now, He blesses us all, but in different ways. Your blessing might not suit me, and God, Who knows best, fits each one with the good things most necessary for him. Thus one man has the blessing of wealth, another that of poverty; one has the strength of a fighting man, another's strength is made perfect in weakness. One has the blessing of possessions, another the blessing of knowing how to do without. A man may find a blessing in a healthy body, or in a sick bed. There is one kind of blessing, however, which God gives to all who love Him and trust in Him. He grants them the blessing of *safety*. "Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee." The man whose trust is in

the Lord has perfectly restful peace, he knows he is safe, because "underneath are the Everlasting Arms." This is the greatest of blessings, and it belongs to everyone who has a firm faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. For us, as for Israel of old, the promise stands, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." There are some days more tiring than others; days when the journey of life seems to be all uphill, when the path we tread is very rough and stony; days when the burden laid upon us seems greater than we can bear; days when the battle of life waxes very hot, and we faint and stagger in the ranks. Then it is that we feel the Everlasting Arms most strongly, then it is that we realize that the Lord lifteth up all those that are down, that strength is given us according to our need, that "underneath are the Everlasting Arms."

Most of us, brethren, have known trials and sorrows. As we look back now into the past, and recall that dark, sad time of trouble, we wonder how we ever came through it. There was that terrible illness, that crushing bereavement, that sudden shock. We were out in a great sea of trouble, and the waters went in even unto our soul. But we came safely through all. Why was it? Because God knows everyone's strength and everyone's weakness exactly, and He measures all burdens to suit all shoulders, and deals out our strength as each day's work requires. Even when a man is afflicted above measure, like Job, he has a double measure of patience given to him. "As thy days, so

shall thy strength be." Let that promise cheer and comfort us. We may have very many days and very dark days before us. Our feet may be very weary before they stand in the green pastures of the better land, our hands may ache and droop often before they are stretched out to receive the reward of victory. But the longer the journey the greater will be the strength, the more tired the limbs the stronger and more helpful will be the Everlasting Arms. Have you ever watched a mother teaching her little child to walk? The little one is eager to run alone, and goes off quickly with weak, faltering steps, ready to fall at any moment. But the mother's arms are stretched out to save it, and although the child thinks he is walking alone, underneath are the loving arms. So God deals with His children. We think we are walking alone, choosing our own path, making our own way in life, but it is God Who is guiding us, helping us, supporting us, "underneath are the Everlasting Arms."

This help which comes from God *never ceases*. It is the *eternal* God Who is our refuge, it is the *Everlasting Arms* which are underneath. Earthly friends, however kind and helpful, must leave us one day. The tenderest mother must be parted from her child, the dearest friends must separate at the grave side. The strong arms, the kindly voices, of other days are no more with us. One Friend, however, remains to us, One Who says, "I will *never* leave thee, nor forsake thee," One Who is with us always, even unto the end of the world,

“underneath are the Everlasting Arms.” *Underneath.* That means that God’s care for us is the *foundation* upon which we build. A foundation is below, out of sight, underneath. Yet all depends upon it; the safety of the structure which we can see, hangs upon the foundation which we cannot see, underneath. The fool says in his heart—There is no God, there are no protecting, supporting arms, because we cannot see them. Neither can we see the foundation on which his house is built, “underneath are the Everlasting Arms.” We see the ship riding out in the storm, safe in spite of the fury of wind and waves, but we cannot see the anchor which makes her safe, that is far out of sight, many a fathom deep in the stormy water. So our safety does not lie in the outward things of the world, which are visible to the sight, but in the invisible help of Almighty God, “underneath are the Everlasting Arms.”

The house which is built upon the rock stands firm against the storm and tempest, all depends upon the foundation. So the life which is built upon a firm faith in God stands unshaken, though the storms and waves of this troublesome world beat never so fiercely. Some lives are like those badly-built houses which unscrupulous people run up so quickly. They are well enough to look at for a little while, but they soon crack and fall to pieces, because they have no sound foundation. The life which lasts is one founded upon the rock of faith, it stands unmoved, because “underneath are the Everlasting Arms.”

If you dig deep enough into the soil, you come to the bed rock. If you go down deep enough into the subject you will find that underneath all things are the Everlasting Arms. Take the world in which we live, with its wondrous forces, its regular seasons, its stars and suns, its eclipses and earthquakes. Who made all this, who keeps the mighty machine in motion? The shallow man looks through a cheap telescope, and talks about nature and science. The real man of science looks deeper, and finds that underneath all are the Everlasting Arms. "God upholdeth the same for ever." Look into the history of your own lives. Where did any good thing which you may possess come from? Where did you obtain any one of those graces which you have? Is there any place in the world where you can buy for money such things as love, peace, joy, hope, patience, faith, meekness, gentleness? Dig down deep, look beneath the surface, and you will find underneath all the good things the Everlasting Arms. What makes a man unselfish, willing to sacrifice himself for others? There is no school nor college in all the world where they provide that kind of education. These things come from God; if our lives be holy, it is because underneath are the Everlasting Arms.

In *time of prosperity* remember whence the blessing comes. We talk about being self-made men, and architects of our own fortunes, and the like, but it is all nonsense. We cannot by our exertions make one hair of our heads, or add a cubit to our stature. We must do

our part, of course, but true prosperity and the power to enjoy is a gift that cometh of the Lord. "Underneath are the Everlasting Arms." What has preserved you all these years, and brought you through all trials, and dangers, and difficulties? Your own forethought and carefulness? They will not ensure you from taking a deadly disease, or meeting with a terrible accident. The reason that you are here to-day, safe and well, is that God has had you in charge, "underneath are the Everlasting Arms."

In time of affliction and sorrow remember what is underneath it all. You may have passed through many trials, tears may have been your meat day and night, and the night may have been very dark and dreary. But what then? Did not the morning come at last? You found strength to bear those trials, you were borne up above the sea of sorrow as a drowning man is borne up by a strong swimmer. The stormy wind and tempest raged horribly, but you came through safe. Why? Because God was taking care of you, "underneath are the Everlasting Arms." When a child is overtaken by a sudden storm he runs for shelter, and takes refuge in his father's arms. So with all of us; when the sudden loss or sorrow comes upon us like a whirlwind, we are dazed and blinded for a moment, but if we can turn to God our Father all is well, we are quite safe, because "underneath are the Everlasting Arms." A traveller tells us how in climbing the Alps he came to a spot where the upward path was crossed by a wide crack or

opening, and to fall down this terrible chasm meant certain death. One of the guides swung himself over the opening, and kneeling down on the edge of the precipice said to the traveller, "Do not fear, place your foot there, and trust to my arm to bring you over."

Again and again as we climb up the steep path of life we come to some dangerous spot, some place where a false slip would be fatal, some difficulty which we cannot overcome for ourselves, some deep gulf of sorrow where there seems no bottom. Then it is that we need to be like the traveller. We must be *brave*. God whispers to us, "Fear not, for I am with thee." We must *do our part*, for God helps those who help themselves. But above all, we must trust to the Everlasting Arms; God says to us, "Trust to My Arm to bring you over." Dear brethren, comfort yourselves with these words, "Underneath are the Everlasting Arms." Underneath everything in your life, therefore do not worry and vex yourselves about the future. If sickness comes to you remember that the Lord will make all your bed in your sickness, "underneath are the Everlasting Arms." If sorrow and misfortune overtake you remember Whose Arm is underneath it all to support you. A child in a burning house leaped fearlessly from the window because it knew its father's arms were open below to receive it. So when the fire of affliction burns very fiercely look underneath and see the Everlasting Arms of Almighty God ready to bear you up, and save you.

And in the last hour of all, the hour of death, remember the Everlasting Arms. People have strangely wrong ideas of death. They speak of the grave as being a kind of bottomless pit which swallows up all; they speak of the spirits of the departed as wandering through the dark galleries of the lower world. Not so the Christian. He lays his dead friend in the grave in sure and certain hope of the resurrection. The grave is not all dark; there, underneath, are the Everlasting Arms. He does not think of the souls of the departed as shuddering in the twilight of a dim world, but as being at rest in one of the many mansions of the Father's House, as being with Jesus, as being safe, quite safe, because "underneath are the Everlasting Arms."

Sermon XXVIII.

THINGS FORGOT.

DEUTERONOMY VIII. II.

“Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God.”



LAS, we all forget so easily and so soon! David says in the Psalms, “I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies.” In these hurrying, feverish days many people say they have no time to think, and many more are afraid to think. They want to forget, they want to blot out the former pages of their life’s story; but it may not be, what we have written, we have written, and it remains to witness against us. Self-examination is a duty very much neglected. We are all ready enough to sit in judgment on another, and to call his acts in question, but we are not so eager to obey the Commandment—Let a man examine *himself*. We forget what manner of men we are, and what manner of life we are leading, and so we wander from the right path and lose our way. “I quite forgot,” is a very common excuse, and it has ruined many a life, many a soul. Let us to-day imitate David’s example, and call

our own ways to remembrance, and we shall see how much we have forgotten which concerns our peace.

First among the things forgot I place our *opportunities of good*. Some of us had godly parents who loved us, and taught us the way of life, and prayed for us. Can none of us recall the death of a good father or mother? We knelt in the hushed room, and listened through our tears to those faint words from the pale lips. We knew that they were the last words we should ever hear from that dear voice on earth. We knew that they were the words of love, such love as only a parent knows, and we listened with eager attention.

"O, but they say, the tongues of dying men
Enforce attention like deep harmony;
Where words are scarce, they are seldom spent in vain;
For they breathe truth that breathe their words in pain."

Yes, we listened with a sad heart whilst the weak, fluttering words came, and told us to remember our Creator in the days of our youth, before the evil days come; when they urged us to keep innocency, for that shall bring a man peace at the last; whilst they prayed us to keep ourselves pure, since the pure in heart shall see God; whilst they begged us to love God's House, and to be faithful to His Altar. Then the words were murmured, "For Christ's sake, for my sake," and the rest was silence. We went forth into the world to our work and our labour until the evening, the words of those dead lips still fresh in our memory; we went into the battle of life protected by the best of shields, a good mother's

prayers. But the time went on, and the grass grew thick in the Churchyard, and the noise of the world was very loud in our ears, and we forgot the words of our mother, the resolutions we had made. I wonder if any of you have known what it is to open an old letter of loving counsel and warning, written long ago, or to turn the leaf of your Bible which a dead hand marked ; many a one has found a heart-ache at such a time, and been forced to say—Oh, that I were now as I was then ! I might have been so different, but I forgot, I forgot. Some of us can look back sadly to the times when we were innocent children, and Heaven was very close to us, and now we are obliged to confess that—

“ The children's games are over,
The rest is over with youth—
The world, the good games, the good times,
The belief, and the love, and the truth.”

Next among things forgot I place *the vows and promises of our Baptism*. Some of us when we put away childish things, put away the responsibilities of our Baptism also, as if that were a childish thing which we had outgrown. Brethren, our Baptism is just the most important event in our life. It is the turning-point, the commencement of our spiritual career, which must end in eternal joy or eternal misery. If we could see the sign of the Cross, which was written in water, shining in fire upon our brow, would not some of us look upon it with shame and terror, as witnessing against us ? We were made the

children of God, members of Christ, inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven; we *are* all this now, but what is our life? Are we walking worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called? Look on your way of life, my brother, my sister, and then ask yourself the honest question—Am I living as God's child; do I remember that I am a member of that holy Church which Christ purchased with His Blood; do I realize that my body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost, and that God dwells in me? In our Baptism it was asked for us that we might continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant till our life's end. My brethren, what sort of soldiers have we shown ourselves hitherto? Have we fought our hardest against the devil, the world, and the flesh? Have we stood firm in the evil day, with our spiritual armour buckled on? Have we been always brave for Christ, ready to uphold His honour, willing to suffer for His sake, always prepared to show our colours? I fear many of us must feel that they have been cowardly soldiers of Christ, that they have turned themselves back in the day of battle. We speak of their Baptismal vows, and they answer—I quite forgot. Surely we need to pray daily that the promises of our Baptism may remain fresh in our memory, surely we need daily to hear the warning, "Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God."

Again, among things frequently forgot, I place the *good things God has given us*. Our troubles we remember. We recall the time of our severe illness, or our sad loss,

we write our sorrows in our diary, and carve them upon tombstones, but how seldom do we keep a record of God's mercies? You say to me—I have known many trials, many afflictions. And I answer—And what of the blessings? How many good things has God given you throughout your life? In some old-fashioned houses you will find a jar of rose leaves, which have been preserved from year to year, and as often as the jar is opened the rose leaves give forth a sweet scent. I would that we might gather up and preserve the memory of God's blessings to us, they would make our lives sweet and beautiful as the years roll by. Too many of us mark the road of life with tombstones, erected over dead hopes and buried joys; let us rather try to build altars of thanksgiving for the Lord's care of us, and to raise out of our stony griefs Bethel, the House of God.

“I called mine own ways to remembrance.” As a rule we forget them. I have thought that if we could read that book wherein our past is written, how astonished we should be. Think what it would be to turn over the leaves and read the record of our life, childhood, youth, manhood. Acts and words which we have forgotten are written in that book of remembrance. Secrets which we deemed dead and buried are recorded there. There is our record through all the years of our life. What blushes of shame, what tears of remorse, would come to most of us as we read the acts of sin and folly, of selfishness and idleness, of neglect

and carelessness, of which we have been guilty. The foolish spendthrift takes the bills which he owes and casts them aside, and forgets them, and so comes to ruin. Let us call our ways to remembrance, keeping in mind the great fact that however much we may forget, the day must come when the final account must be met and answered.

“I called mine own ways to remembrance.” Some people do that after a fashion, but they only remember the good things which they have done. They recall the past, and smile over it complacently, as people do who read over again flattering letters and testimonials. The more some people look back over their past, the more pleased they are with themselves. They are never tired of looking in the glass, as it were, and admiring their own perfections. Rather should we remember the sins and faults of our best things. We have been regular Church-goers, perhaps. But how often our body has been in God’s House, and our thoughts and feelings out in the world. We have given money in charity, perhaps, but have we ever given *love*? Have we ever realized that the poor and needy, the sick and sorrowful, are our *brothers*, that we have one God Who is Father of us all, and that therefore the most miserable outcast of the streets is our brother? Have we been always careful to speak of others with kindness, as being members of the same family, the Holy Church of Christ throughout the world? Have we realized that everyone who needs our help, however degraded,

or disgraceful, is our *neighbour*? As we look back upon our cold, formal service, our heartless prayers, our loveless charity, I do not think we have much cause for rejoicing.

Too many people are so well satisfied with themselves that they never improve, never grow in grace, never go up higher. It is because they *forget*. One tells me that he is a Christian man, that he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that therefore all is well with him. My brother, be not deceived. How can you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ when you do not attempt to do what He bids you? He tells you to love your enemies, to pray for them that despitefully use you. *Do you do this*, are you gentle to those who use you roughly? You know you are not, and yet you say you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. He tells you to think of others first and self last, to deny yourselves for the good of your brethren. *Do you do this?* Did you ever go without a meal, without *anything*, for the sake of someone else? Who is the first person for whom you think and scheme, is it self or another? Yet you say you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. He bids you make the worship of Almighty God the first and principal thing of your life, *is it so?* Which comes first in your life, the service of God, or your own business or pleasure? Especially the Lord Jesus bids all who call themselves by His Name to worship Him at the Altar in Holy Communion, and He teaches us that that Blessed Sacrament is the bond which binds us together,

and makes us all one family, one with Christ and one with each other. He bids you draw near and take the Body of your Lord. *Do you?* What is the proportion of Communicants here, or anywhere, to the whole congregation? Jesus called us to this Blessed Sacrament with almost His last words, but we forget so soon, so easily.

Let David be our teacher—"I called mine own ways to remembrance, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies." It has been rightly said that this is the true order of conversion. First, self-examination, calling our ways to remembrance. Then sorrow for the sins of the past. But this is not enough. To weep over the past will not help us, we must think of the future. We must take the next step, and make a fresh start—"I turned my feet unto Thy testimonies." Some of us have been travelling along the way of the world, listening to men rather than God. And we have come, as it were, to the parting of the ways, and we know not which road to take. All ways do not lead to Heaven we know. There is only one road thither, even the way of God's Commandments; we must pause and consider what we seek hereafter, and we must choose our road accordingly. When we have chosen the right road we must journey on carefully, watching. Because we are on the straight path it does not follow that we shall not stray from it. Many a one starts on the right way, who ends in the wrong. The mariner never takes his eye from the compass if he would keep a true

course, we must go on our way ever looking unto Jesus.

Again, David bids us be prompt in what we do. "I made haste, and prolonged not the time to keep Thy Commandments." If we have need to turn, now is the time to do it. When Moses asked Pharaoh, "When shall I intreat for thee?" the answer was, "To-morrow." But to-morrow never comes to them who put off repentance. We must seize the present moment; like S. Matthew, we must at once rise up, and leave all, and follow Jesus.


"Lord God of hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget! Lest we forget!"

Sermon XXIX.

THE BOOKS.

PSALM LVI. 8. (*P.B.V.*)

"Are not these things noted in Thy Book?"

N some great libraries there are preserved books of immense age, and priceless value. Some were written ages before the discovery of printing, and were carefully copied and illuminated by the hands of patient workers in abbey cloister and monastic cell. They deal with all manner of subjects, good and bad, true and false. They contain the burning words of preachers, the sweet fancies of poets, the wisdom of philosophers. Some are full of dreams and imaginings, others of hard facts and arguments. I speak to you to-day of two books, which are older and more wonderful, and more precious than all other books put together. One of them is on earth, the other is in Heaven. They are the two books of God. On earth we have God's Book, the Bible; the other book we shall see one day, when the great white throne is set for judgment, and the book shall be opened, and we shall

be judged out of it. "Are not these things noted in Thy Book?"

Let us think first of God's Book here in earth, what things are noted therein? First, there are noted there *great and precious promises*. There are some books which profess to give us information on every possible subject, and to supply whatever we may want to know. As a fact they often disappoint us when we search their pages. Not so God's Book. There is something there for everyone, and just what he needs most. There are promises noted there which will cheer and comfort and strengthen and encourage all sorts and conditions of men. Sometimes we receive a message or a letter, and we can make nothing of it, and we say—This is not for me. But the messages of God's Book are always sent direct to the right person, and as we read those good old words in the Bible, we say—This is meant for me.

Yes, the Bible is a book for everyone. Are you in doubt? Are you uncertain whether you can find pardon and salvation, whether God loves you? Look into God's Book. I have heard of a young man who was left heir to his father's property, but when the father died another disputed the son's claim. The matter came into the law courts, and the young man was told that if only he could produce his father's will his inheritance would be secure. One day he opened a Bible to seek comfort and guidance in his troubles, and from between its pages a paper fell out. It was his father's

will, in which the property was distinctly left to him. Brethren, if you would know your Heavenly Father's will about you, look where these things are noted in His Book. Over and over again He gives you there great and precious promises. He tells you that though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow, and that the Blood of Christ cleanseth from *all* sin. He assures you that whosoever cometh unto Him He will in no wise cast out. You feel that you have sinned; then here is a word of comfort for you, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." If you doubt or hesitate, here is a promise and an invitation, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." That invitation is for all men, "*whosoever* will, let him take"—so it is for you. Here is another promise equally wide, "Come unto Me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Are you among the weary and heavy laden ones? Then the promise is for you; "Come unto Me, *all* ye that travail."

Perhaps you feel that you have been very far off from God, dwelling in a place of darkness and of sin. Well, there is a way out. An accident happened in one of our northern coalpits, and the men were shut in without light, or means of reaching it. There they remained in the pitch darkness, and some prayed and sang hymns to God. Then one of the miners remembered that he had heard that there was a passage connecting the pit with another that had not been worked for years. With

difficulty they found the passage ; it was very long and narrow and rough, and they had to drag themselves slowly and painfully along, lying flat upon the ground. At last they saw a gleam of light, and presently they were safe in the other pit. We, my brethren, may have been in the lowest and darkest place of sin, but there is a way out. There is a passage back to light and life and freedom, a rough, hard way, and often wet with tears, but it is the only means of escape, and that path is called the way of repentance. Here is the precious promise pointing us to the means of escape, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Are you in sorrow and bereavement ? Then these things are noted in God's Book, and there are many promises for you. It has been well said that men used to call a certain cape the Cape of Storms, but after many mariners had weathered it, it came to be called the Cape of Good Hope. So you who have been out in the rough sea of trouble have found your Cape of Storms, but if you have put your whole trust and confidence in the Lord, He has delivered you out of all your afflictions, and what was to you the Cape of Storms is now the Cape of Good Hope. God has special promises for you who have known sorrow. He says to you, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." So you see, O mourner, that your share is a blessing. Here is an assurance of help, "Many are the

afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of all."

Some of us may be condemned to a lonely life, we have seen what we loved best on earth taken from us, our home is as sad as an empty house, only the memories of happier days live in it and haunt it. "Are not these things noted in Thy Book?" Here is a promise for anyone who thinks he has no friends in the world—"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." We cannot feel altogether alone if we believe that promise. We cannot be altogether in darkness as long as the Light of the World, the Lord Jesus, is with us. A great preacher says very beautifully, "Why should I cry out if the sun of my prosperity goes down, if in the darkness of my adversity I shall be the better able to count the starry promises with which my faithful God has been pleased to gem the sky."

Again, whatsoever we are, and whatsoever our condition may be, we have a promise that what we ask God in His Son's Name we shall receive. We can only send a petition to an earthly Sovereign at certain seasons, and with certain formalities. We can make our requests known unto God in any place, and at any time. The way to the North Pole is blocked by ice, and it can only be approached at certain times. The way to God, the road to the Mercy-Seat, is always open, and no earnest prayers are ever stopped on the journey. There stands the promise noted in God's Book, "Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall

find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”

“Are not these things noted in Thy Book?” What things? *Some great examples for our imitation and encouragement.* If we fall on evil days and evil tongues, if men spitefully use us, and we are tempted to murmur and to resent, then there is an example in God’s Book for our guidance, we look on One Whose Face is more marred than any man’s, One Who, though sinless, has upon Him the marks of the scourging, and the spitting, and the thorns, One Whose Hands and Feet were swift to do good, and yet they are nailed to a Cross. And how does He bear all this? “When He was reviled, He reviled not again. As a sheep dumb before her shearers, so He opened not His mouth.” What does He say of His murderers? “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” If we are tempted to murmur and be discontented with our state, there is set before us as an example an old man who is a fast prisoner in a Roman dungeon. He has no friends, no comforts, which the world can give, but his love for the Lord Jesus sustains him ; and he says, “I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content.” If we think that we have sinned too much to find pardon, there is noted for us an example. A ragged, sinful son has arisen and come home to his father, and his father has taken him in his arms, and the angels in Heaven are singing for joy.

What more things are noted in God’s Book? *Some terrible warnings against sin.* God’s Book is not all

milk and honey. If there is sweetness and pardon promised to the penitent, there is stern judgment for the hardened and the unbelieving. The prison house and the rod are noted there, as well as the green pastures and the many mansions. Let no man say he has not been warned. These things are noted in God's Book. We are told of the open door of mercy, but we are told also that *the door was shut*. We are told of the dying thief, and his promise of pardon; and we are told also of his brother thief left to die impenitent and lost. We read of the peace of God, and we read also that "there is no peace, saith my God, for the wicked." We are told that in our Father's House are many mansions, but we are told also that nothing unclean shall enter there, nothing that defileth or maketh a lie. "Are not these things noted in Thy Book?"

Think now of that other Book of God which is in Heaven. What things are noted there? Our *lives* are noted there. In a prison they keep a book in which every prisoner's past is recorded as far as it is known, his conduct whilst in confinement, his previous convictions and offences, so that the man's life can be read at a glance. But the book is not always complete, there are mistakes and omissions in it. God's Book has no errors. All the story of all our lives is written there from the day of our Baptism till this day. All our *sins* are noted there. The things which we have done, and which we ought not to have done; the things which we have neglected to do, sins of com-

mission and of omission, are not these things noted in Thy Book? If we have not repented and found pardon, these things are written over against our name. If we have repented, they are blotted out. All our *words* are noted in God's Book. That angry speech of yours, that oath, that cruel story, that spiteful judgment, are not these things noted in God's Book? These things are written down, and will be used in evidence against us.

But there are other things noted in God's Book. Our *efforts after good* are recorded there. When you knelt on your knees, my brother, and battled hard with the tempter, God saw you, and your struggle was noted in His Book. Your *prayers*, the agonized cry for help and pardon, when you clung to God's Hand in supplication, these are all in God's Book. When you denied yourself to help another, when you comforted that poor mourner, when you soothed that frightened child, when you bore with that evil temper, God saw it all; these things are noted in His Book.

Then, lastly, our *tears* are noted in God's Book. In the middle ages one of the most famous pilgrimages was to Vendôme, where they showed a tear of the Lord Jesus inclosed in a crystal vessel. We know that Christ's tears are all in God's Bottle, and are noted in His Book. The tears which He shed for the sins of the world, the tears which fell in the agony at Gethsemane. These plead for our pardon. Yes, and the tears of His people are noted in God's Book. The tears of penitence, like those of S. Peter and Mary

Magdalene, are there. Yours and mine, my brother, my sister, when we fell into grievous sin, and by God's mercy truly repented. God said to Hezekiah, "I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears." He will see our tears, He will hear our prayer.

THE END.

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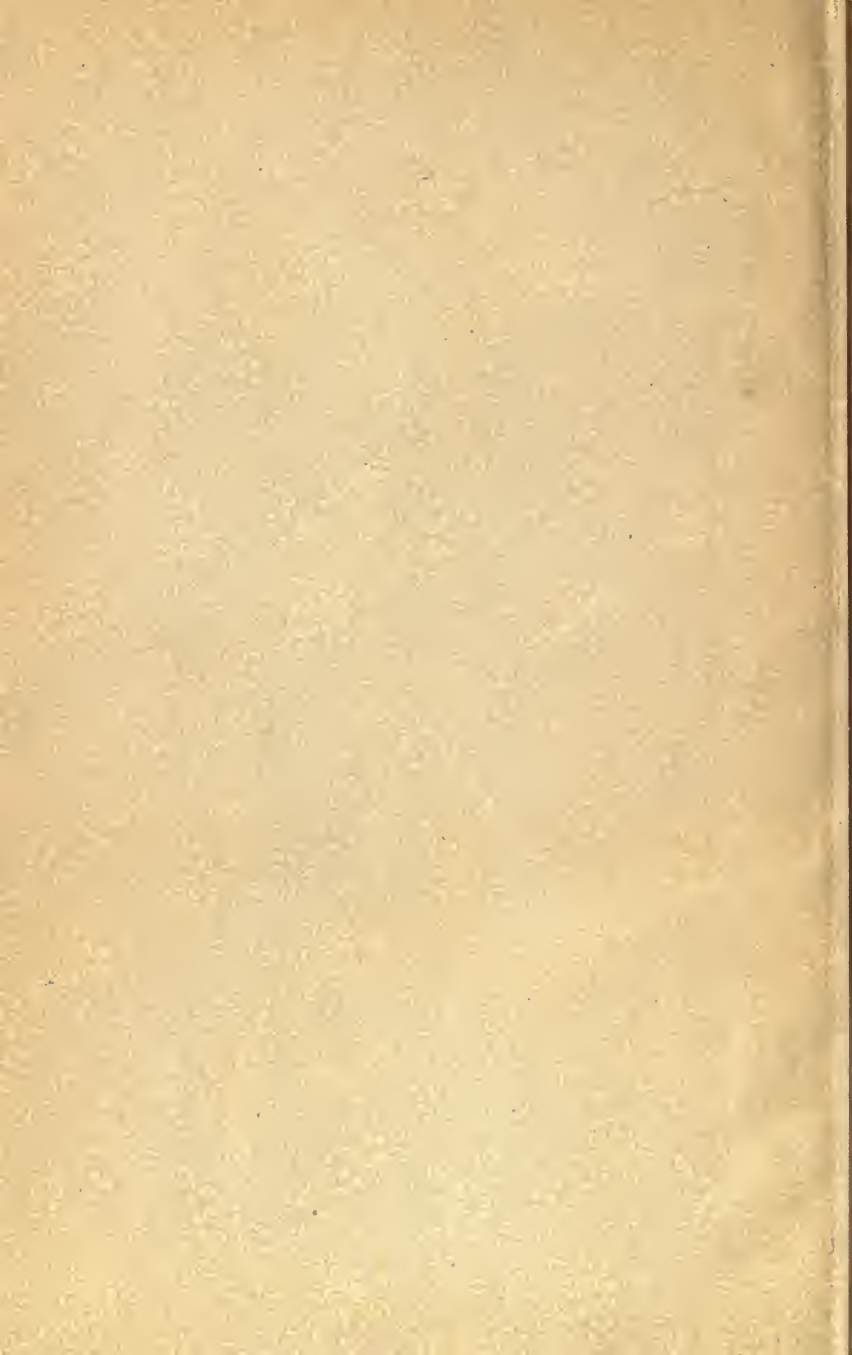
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